the weekly
Standard

OCTOBER 20, 2008 $4.95

NAOMI WOLF: SHE'S COME UNDONE
KATHERINE MANGU-WARD

NIGHTMARE ON PENNSYLVANIA AVE

- **INVASION OF THE WALLET SNATCHERS**
  Matthew Continetti on Obamanomics
- **NIGHT OF THE LIVING CONSTITUTION**
  Terry Eastland on Obama's judges
- **THE FOG**
  Frederick W. Kagan on Obama's foreign policy
- **THE CABINET OF DR. OBAMA**
  Yuval Levin on a bad health care prescription

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REBUILD AFTER METH

The headlines about methamphetamine—meth—have been grim. This highly addictive drug leaves a path of destruction that hurts families and entire communities. Users suffer severe health consequences; children are often neglected; and communities face dangerous crime and overburdened law enforcement.

Are we making strides in the fight against meth? Absolutely. From first responders to substance abuse professionals, those who work on the frontlines to combat meth recognize the progress.

- ***Meth use among youth and young adults has declined significantly since 2002.***[1]
- ***More meth users are seeking help. Meth treatment admissions have more than tripled in the past decade.***[2]
- ***And law enforcement officials are finding fewer and fewer domestic meth labs—meth lab seizures in the U.S. have decreased dramatically since 2004.***[3]

There is still work to be done, however—from eradicating meth production and distribution to helping those battling addiction. Consider Teresa. She is a mother, Girl Scout volunteer, and website developer. Her life took a sharp turn when she started using meth to lose weight. Her story went from bad to worse as she abandoned her family, including her 4-year-old daughter, for nearly a year in the search for her next high. She eventually entered a treatment program and made a commitment to conquer her addiction. Today, she is drug-free and a leader in anti-meth efforts in her community. There are thousands of people like Teresa out there, showing individuals and communities what they need to know.

- ***Treatment is available, and it works.***
- ***Drug addiction treatment is cost-effective—for every $1 invested in drug treatment programs, there is a $12 savings in crime and health care costs.***[4]

Each year, nearly 150,000 people are admitted to treatment for methamphetamine.[5] And outcomes for meth users entering treatment are comparable to those for users of other similar drugs.[6] Find out about substance abuse treatment, and support meth treatment in your community.

Learn more at methresources.gov or call 1-800-662-HELP.

American Society of Addiction Medicine
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)
National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers
NAADAC, Association for Addiction Professionals
National Association of Counties
National Association of Social Workers
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Drug Enforcement Officers Association
National Narcotics Officers' Association Coalition
The Partnership for a Drug-Free America
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
State Associations of Addiction Services

[1]SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), 2002-2006, Table 8.40B.
[2]SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) 2007, Table 1b.
[3]DOJ, National Drug Intelligence Center, National Methamphetamine Threat Assessment 2008, December 2007.
[4]National Institute on Drug Abuse, "Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide," 2000.
[5]SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) 2007, Table 1a.
[6]National Institute on Drug Abuse, "Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide," 2000.

Office of National Drug Control Policy

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I'm OK; You're a Selfish, Partisan Hypocrite

A survey of political attitudes finds postpartisan lovey-dovey in short supply.

Social science confirms what political observers have been telling us for a long time: there's a clamor in America to dampen the spirit of intense partisanship that prevails in Washington. This yearning for "transpartisan" politics is a veritable holy rite among independents and moderates. But a survey of voters' attitudes confirms that compromise is an easy word but a hard concept.

For example, more than a third of Democrats and almost half of Republicans insist that party leaders should "stick to their principles even if it means nothing gets done." It seems they want compromise on their own terms: that the other side break ranks and join the side of light in exchange for a pat on the back. Worse still, Republicans and Democrats alike have a stubborn belief in both their own virtues (open-minded, generous, honest) and their opponents' flaws (mean, selfish, closed-minded). Oddly, neither side worries much about its children marrying into the enemy camp. Is this how political independents are born?

—By James W. Ceaser

What a "Change" Candidate . . . Won't

Our new president will face familiar friends and even more familiar foes.

When President Bush leaves office, will America be liked by most of the world? Not necessarily. Our new president will still be confronted by a world that either appreciates America or, for self-interested reasons, will challenge it. Long-term global challenges are bipartisan concerns—neither caused by conservative Republicans nor solved by easy answers from liberal Democrats.

A hopeful view takes in a stabilizing Iraq; new friends in Germany, France, and Africa; and a Taliban kept at bay in Afghanistan. But balance that with a newly resurgent Russia, proud and angry and flush with petrodollars, and an Iran that still wants to build a bomb and menace its neighbors. The war on terrorism, which predated Bush, also will outlast him. Our rivals across the globe suspect we are played out—short of energy, long on debt, and hogging the world's resources. They think the future is theirs, the past ours. They will surely challenge the next president, however nice, to prove them wrong.

—By Victor Davis Hanson

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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the weekly Standard

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Varieties of Anti-Palinism

'Newsweek' editor Jon Meacham

The increasing descent into childishness by the mainstream media, under the influence of their loathing for Sarah Palin, is a trend worth chronicling. Exhibit A comes from the latest *Newsweek*, whose editor Jon Meacham (see left) penned a tedious and condescending cover story, the gist of which is: This commoner isn't fit for the exalted office of the vice-presidency. Meacham calls Palin an exponent of "mindless populism."

That would make Meacham's magazine, we suppose, an exemplar of mindless elitism. A couple of months back we showcased the frequent, hagiographic use of Barack Obama's likeness on the *Newsweek* cover and suggested they might want to start calling themselves *Obamaweek*. Those covers showed that the magazine had a knack for aestheticizing its hero-worship. This week's edition shows the opposite: thinly disguised malice in the form of an extreme close-up of Palin—every pore and hair follicle unretouched and magnified. The remarkable thing is she still looks pretty good. But the vulgarity and meanness of the *Newsweek* editors shines through. Elitism has rarely been so unattractive. ♦

Always Look on the Bright Side

Watching the stock market and the political market this past week, The Scrapbook was reminded of the old saying John McCain attributes to Chairman Mao: "It's always darkest before it's totally black." But we're happy to report not all is dark, at least not yet. Last week two things happened that will buttress global stability and make America more secure for years to come.

First, the Bush administration finally approved the sale of defensive weapons to our democratic ally Taiwan. President Bush had agreed to the arms deal back in 2001, but delayed the sale so as not to offend China. This cost the Taiwanese valuable leverage and gave China the upper-hand in cross-strait relations. And the administration gained nothing from the delay. The Chinese still protested last week, canceling some contacts with the U.S. defense and diplomatic establishment. Life goes on. The administration could have made this deal better by agreeing to the sale of F-16 fighter jets Taiwan has requested—F-16s that would create many jobs for American workers. Still, in the end, score one for democracy and for Taiwan's ability to negotiate safely with mainland China.

Second, on October 8, President Bush signed into law a major civil nuclear cooperation agreement with India. The agreement faced considerable opposition in both houses of Congress and almost brought down the government of Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh. But, on balance, it's a good deal that will bring India's civilian nuclear program into the global nonproliferation fold, open a new market to the U.S. nuclear industry, and solidify ties with a rising democratic power.

We're happy to report that both developments had the support of presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama. So: America's allies are stronger, America is safer, and bipartisanship in foreign policy hasn't disappeared completely. Not bad for a week when everything else seemed to be going down the tubes. ♦

Diva vs. Diva

The Scrapbook notes with horror the war of words that has erupted between Aretha Franklin and Tina Turner. It began last February on the Grammy awards show, when Beyoncé (we don't know what it means, either)

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"AREN'T YOU THE OWNER OF THIS BANK?"

handed Tina Turner a Grammy and referred to her (within earshot of millions of viewers in Televisionland) as "the queen." Back in Detroit, this did not sit so well with Aretha Franklin, the self-described Queen of Soul, who expressed her displeasure at this public coronation of a rival claimant, calling Beyoncé's compliment "a cheap shot for controversy."

Tina Turner, to her credit, did not respond. But that was then. Last week, in a *USA Today* interview, Mrs. Turner was reminded of Miss Franklin's high dudgeon and—probably in an effort to calm the waters—explained that "she's the queen of soul and I'm the queen of rock 'n' roll. There were so many kings and queens there that night. Her ego must be so big to think she was the only one."

Then, realizing what she had just said, Mrs. Turner added—no doubt with a nervous laugh: "That's how queens are!"

At which point, the plus-sized Aretha exploded—verbally, that is. "I never figured [Tina Turner] to resort to tacky press just to sell a few tickets," she declared. "I really had put her in a different class—higher than that." And then, wielding her words like a stiletto, she informed *USA Today* that "no one has been more gracious . . . to their peers than I have, and I am confident and secure enough to do so, unlike some others."

Unlike some others. Those three words, from the voice that spelled out "R-E-S-P-E-C-T," must surely have wounded the woman who gave us the "nice and rough" version of "Proud Mary." That's why we hope that Tina will choose not to respond in kind, and spare us the disheartening spectacle of two Motown divas descending into their golden years—both are closing in on 70—rolling around on the wrestling mat.

As for their putative royal status, The Scrapbook has some views of our own. Aretha Franklin may be the "queen of soul" in her own mind, but it's been 41 years since "Respect" hit the charts, and the distinction has grown a bit stale. And as for Tina Turner, everybody knows that Little Richard, not Mrs. Turner, is the "queen of rock 'n' roll." ♦

Welcome Michael Ramirez!

The Scrapbook is thrilled to announce that two-time (1994 and 2008) Pulitzer-winning cartoonist Michael Ramirez has agreed to become a weekly contributor to these pages. Michael's cartoons also appear in *Investor's Business Daily*, where he serves as coeditor of the editorial page. And while it may be a little early to be making Christmas recommendations, we nonetheless urge readers to stockpile copies of his just-published collection, *Everyone Has the Right to My Opinion*, for the upcoming gift-giving season. ♦

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Casual

Bedtime Stories

I'm not against children's literature, though I'm not exactly for it either. Books make kids smart. Smart kids grow into smart young adults. And smart young adults will eventually compete with us in the workforce, hastening our obsolescence. As I tell young people when they ask me how to get started in journalism: "First and foremost, shut the books and watch lots more television, preferably cable news." I can feel them dropping IQ points by the minute.

Since I wish my own kids no competitive disadvantage (someone has to take care of me when writing opinion journalism has been outsourced to Bangalore), there are children's books aplenty in our house. Not that they get read by me. I leave the reading to my wife, partly because, though she's only in her 30s, she reads as well as most 40-year-olds, but mainly because I'm in the words business, and after a punishing day of reading ugly news and celebrity-hate sites, I'd rather look at pretty pictures.

On nights I tuck my sons in, I'll often bring my laptop and crank up the YouTube. We have our own story time of sorts. I show them favorite musicians and natural wonders and men fishing for mako sharks off kayaks. I pose deep philosophical questions, such as, "Who do you think would win in a fight, a jaguar or an anaconda?" Then we check it out. If I have trouble holding their attention, I go to the money question: "Who wants to watch a fat kid fall off a bike?" "I do!" they'll clamor in unison.

I am not teaching them cruelty, I am merely teaching them hard truths. Fat kids have a more difficult time sticking the dismount when jumping dirt bikes. That's not sizeism. That's physics. If you object to this parenting method, your quarrel isn't with me, but with the Laws of Science.

This being election season, however, I recently decided to resume reading duty when a review copy of a new "children's book" came my way, *Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope*. I am violently against poisoning children with politics. While my own prejudices are legion and on display, as I rail against both Democrats and Republicans around the house, dyspeptic as Archie Bunker, I don't encourage my children to follow suit.

DARREN GYGI

If I wanted them to blindly accept agitprop, I'd put them in one of those madrassas like young Barack Obama studied in when he was learning how to become a terrorist. Rather, I want my kids to be freethinkers. They shouldn't inherit my opinions as some kind of birthright. They should work through complexities and come to their own understanding, so that they adopt my opinions as theirs in the fullness of time.

Not everyone is as fair-minded. There are many political children's books of a questionable nature these days, from *Why Mommy is a Democrat* and *It's Just a Plant: A Children's Story of Marijuana* on the left, to *Help! Mom! There Are Liberals Under My Bed!* and *Help! Mom! The 9th Circuit Nabbed the Nativity!* on the right. I'd rather bring skin magazines and loaded guns into my kids' room than this innocence-defiling political porn.

But since my 8-year-old, Luke, is obsessed with presidents (he can recite them all in reverse order), and since Obama seems a pleasant enough fellow who will likely be the next one, I figure I'll give this short bio a go. It's a mistake. From the opening line, which reads, "One day Hope stopped by for a visit," my kids seem puzzled. "Who's she?" asks my 5-year-old, Dean.

From there, it's a propaganda bake-off, a saccharine ball of mush, seasoned with schmaltz and battered in treacle. To give but one example, young Obama does not merely go for a jog along the Hudson River, he notices "the river of hurt and hate and history that separated blacks and whites. … *Don't worry,* said Hope. *I will be your bridge. In time, you will be the bridge for others.*"

I want my kids to learn something about Obama, not to worship him as Barack H. Christ, as though they were Messianic cultists or MSNBC hosts. In one illustration, Obama actually has his hands outstretched in J.C.'s trademark come-unto-me-ye-little-lambs pose, his silhouette outlined in glittery stardust that looks like fireflies. Fortunately, my kids are hard sells. "Why are moths eating Barack Obama?" asks Dean.

I have another book on deck that came as part of the set: *Hillary Rodham Clinton: Dreams Taking Flight*. "Is she the lady who still wants to be president?" asks Luke. But I can't bring myself to read it. Tomorrow night, I tell the boys, we'll do something more healthy, wholesome, and thought-provoking.

We'll watch fat kids fall off their bikes.

Matt Labash

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the weekly Standard

Viva McCain!

It's been a dopey campaign. But they usually are. In 1932, Franklin Roosevelt ran on balancing the budget and cutting government spending. In 1940, it was preserving U.S. neutrality in the European war. In 1960, on the cusp of a decade of fundamental change in race relations and the size and scope of the government, John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon spent a lot of time debating a nonexistent missile gap and Quemoy and Matsu. In 2000, the issue of Islamic terrorism was barely mentioned by George W. Bush or Al Gore.

This isn't a criticism of America or of its democracy. Other countries are no better. And it's not as if our elites are any more far-seeing than our politicians. Election campaigns—like intellectual debates—tend to be past- and present-oriented. But sometimes the past and present are of limited use as guides to the future.

This is surely one of those times. We haven't even begun to understand the implications and consequences of the financial crisis that has burst upon us. We still haven't come to grips with the realities of the post 9/11 world of terror, jihadism, nuclear proliferation, and an axis of dictatorships determined to resist and roll back the advances of freedom and democracy. And we have put off thinking seriously about various Brave New World-type issues that loom before us in the 21st century.

One does sense today that, as Lincoln memorably put it, "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew."

Neither of the two men who have been nominated by their parties for president is perfect for this challenging moment. But one is far less imperfect than the other.

One is an orthodox and timid liberal, personally ambitious but intellectually conventional. For all his talk of hope and change, when has Barack Obama ever shown a willingness to break with liberal orthodoxy or Democratic dogma? What bold decision has he taken, what unpopular idea has he embraced? The odd truth about Obama is that, for all his unsavory radical associations—and they are unsavory and a legitimate issue in the campaign—he's not radical enough for the times and challenges we face.

The other candidate, John McCain, has been all over the map in terms of domestic policies, and has shown a management style during the campaign that makes one worry about the coherence and purposefulness of his

John McCain's favorite movie

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administration. But he's shown strong character in his life, and he's done serious things. His general views are centrist, but he's willing to be bold when necessary. He won't be passive as president, and he'll think anew and act anew as he adjusts to the challenges we face, in the spirit of doing what's necessary to preserve and strengthen the underlying principles of American life.

Katie Couric asked each candidate recently what his favorite movie was. Obama gave an utterly conventional answer: "Oh, I think it would have to be *The Godfather*. One and two. Three not so much. Umm. So-so, but, but that—that saga—I love that movie."

Couric asked him to explain a bit.

> OBAMA: I mean there's this combination of old world gentility and, you know, ritual with this savagery underneath. It's all about family. So it's a great movie. *Lawrence of Arabia*. Great film. One of my favorites—and then *Casablanca*. Who doesn't like *Casablanca*?
> COURIC: I asked for one.
> OBAMA: I'm a movie guy. I can rattle off a bunch of movies. But that *Casablanca*, you know.

That's Obama. He's glib, conventional, won't make a real choice, shows nothing about himself, and says nothing offputting and says nothing impressive.

McCain's answer was in no way conventional:

> *Viva Zapata!* It's a movie made by Elia Kazan. It was one of the trilogy of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *On the Waterfront* and *Viva Zapata!* Marlon Brando stars in it. He plays Zapata. It's a heroic tale of a person who sacrificed everything for what he believed in, and there's some of the most moving scenes in that movie that I've ever seen. And one of them is he gets married—the night of his wedding night—he gets up and he and Jean Peters are in their hotel room—this little room and she says "What's the matter?" And he says, "I gotta go to Mexico City tomorrow. I've gotta be with Pancho Villa and Modero and these people." He says "I can't read." And she reaches over and takes the bible from the—table and opens it up and starts, "In the beginning." You know, it's a great scene. It's great and there's many others that are wonderful too, especially when he dies—when he gives everything for his country and what he believes in.

Which one of these two men do you want to be president in a time of crisis and difficulty? Viva McCain!

—*William Kristol*

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Twits on Parade

Twittering is the newest of the new media. And the worst.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

GARY LOCKE

Maybe you've noticed: These political blogs can be so gabby. Yap yap yap. You go to some website—democretin.com, republicreep.net, whatever—and there will be a new post for you to read, and the blogger goes on for one, two, sometimes three paragraphs, and each paragraph is a huge heap of sentences, two sentences long or even more, and you just want them to get to the point. This is a blog post, not *Middlemarch*, is what you want to say.

That's why God invented Twitter—God or whoever. Twitter is for people who find the pace of blogs too sleepy, the content too wordy, the whole blog thing way, way too 2005. It's an Internet service and a new form of communication that's about to transform political commentary in much the way blogs have, just as decisively, just as permanently. That's what I hear, anyway. CNET News, a respectable source of news about the Internet, if you can imagine such a thing, says this:

> If the 2004 elections hailed the debut of bloggers and the 2006 mid-term elections were when YouTube popped onto the scene, it's looking like 2008 will be the election cycle where Twitter sped to the forefront of the political Web. . . . The microblogging site has proven to be a must-use tool for opinionated news junkies and aspiring pundits.

"Micro" is the key to Twitter blogging. Twitter is based on the tiny. Communication on Twitter happens in real time, instantaneously, without that annoying lag time between the moment when the blogger thinks of something to write and the moment when the reader reads it. On traditional blogs this can often take as much as a minute—an eternity. More important, each post on Twitter can be no longer than 140 characters. Try writing *Middlemarch* in 140 characters.

Here's how it happens. Let's say you're an aspiring twit. You go to www.Twitter.com and create an account. This gives you your own Twitter homepage. You now have access to the 2.5 million people who also have Twitter accounts and who, in turn, now have access to yours. You type your microblog item on either the keypad of your cell phone or the keyboard of your computer. The item is called a "tweet," in keeping with the *Romper Room* vernacular of the Internet. The tweet appears instantly on your Twitter page. It will also appear on the Twitter page of everyone who's signed up to have your tweets appear on their Twitter page. At the same time, you get to read the tweets of all the twits whose messages you have signed up to read. Those tweets show up on your Twitter page too. There can be hundreds of these if you want, scrolling across your computer or cell phone screen as your messages are endlessly updated, a lava flow of one-sentence messages.

It's an ingenious way of keeping in touch, particularly for people who need to expose as much of their lives to public scrutiny as possible. The number of such people is very large, as you may have noticed. Sometimes blogs are just too cumbersome. Suppose you need to go to the bathroom. Is it really worth the trouble of posting this information on your regular blog? Maybe . . . but maybe not. With Twitter, you can just tap your bladder's condition into your cell phone—"got to hit the head"—and everyone you know, and many whom you don't know, can read about it instantly.

The same goes for every event in your life. When written up and broadcast as a tweet, each insignificant brain burp, your mildest reaction to events, every minor piece of news, takes on a kind of importance that it wouldn't have otherwise; suddenly, thanks to the power of Twitter, it seems to be more consequential than it would ever have been thought to be in any earlier age in human history. That delicious falafel you just ate; the chunk of chick pea that got caught in your teeth; your

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curiosity about that awesome tattoo on the cute counterguy who took your order—all can now pass through your consciousness and be placed on public display nearly simultaneously. It's like you're being turned inside out. The fulfillment of a dream.

The Twitter service is only two years old, but it didn't take long for people to figure out its political uses. Everybody has political opinions—you may have noticed this, too—and it's now become an article of faith that everyone's political opinions are of equal value and equally worthy of attention, at least so long as they're similar to yours. Twitter has become a roiling stream of political commentary, unimaginably quick and . . . well, pithy isn't the right word. Tweets are extremely short but seldom pithy. Blunt, maybe. Uncomplicated always.

A number of political reporters and commentators have begun using Twitter, including some for *Time* magazine, the Internet magazine *Slate*, National Public Radio, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*. And lots of bloggers use it, too, of course—though some of them have become squeamish about Twitter after an incident earlier this year. A liberal blogger named Ezra Klein, of the *American Prospect* magazine, got caught Twittering as he watched the late Tim Russert on TV. "f— tim russert," Klein opined to his Twitter page, without the demure dash. "f— him with a spiky acid-tipped d—." What the heck—he was just a blogger tweeting away in his pjs on a drowsy Sunday morning. But then Klein's post was published beyond his intended audience of fellow twits. He was forced to apologize in embarrassment.

A blogger—embarrassed. Twitter is a technology of unprecedented power.

I signed up for Twitter out of a clinical interest. I decided to experience last week's presidential debate by reading the tweets that came across my Twitter page. Many twits had announced they would be "Twittering the debate," writing up their reactions as they happened, in bursts of 140 characters or fewer, and I figured reading these couldn't be any less painful, or more boring, than watching the debate on television, slumped in my Barcalounger and shouting at the TV screen like Ezra Klein. I arranged to have as many twits sending their tweets to my page as I could think of. Many of them were personally unfamiliar to me and known only by their Twitter onscreen aliases. As in chat rooms and blogs, people in the Twitter universe assign themselves screen names. And as in chat rooms and blogs, the names are either too cute, revolting, or inadvertently self-demeaning. The use of screen names shows one way in which the real world differs from the Internet. In the real world you can either have me take your political opinions seriously, or you can call yourself "dogmeat69." You can't do both.

But on the Internet anything goes. I chose to use my given name as my screen name, to throw people off. By early afternoon on the day of the debate, my page was a-Twitter with tweets from all over. A reporter for the *Washington Post* who was covering Barack Obama complained of being trapped in his hotel by Obama's security arrangements. "Feel very second-class citizen," he told his Twitter audience. (With only 140 characters, there's no room for personal pronouns.) Another *Post* reporter who calls himself "TheFix" recommended a restaurant he and wife had eaten in the night before. The randomness of Twitter takes some getting used to.

A large number of Twitterers seemed to be watching television and were content merely to describe what they saw, even the commercials before the debate. "Oliver Stone is advertising on FoxNews," announced one (using only 38 characters). Another complained about the number of guests on a panel on CNN. A third commented on the crawl MSNBC runs at the bottom of the screen. The TV reportage continued even after the debate began. Some of my fellow twits restricted themselves to summarizing, every 30 seconds or so, the previous 30 seconds of televised debate. "I'm confident about the American economy," I heard McCain say from the television in the other room. And instantly the tweet came from NPR: "McCain: confident about American economy." "I think you can work on all three at once, Tom," McCain told the moderator Tom Brokaw. NPR was on the case: "McCain: I think you can work on all three at once, Tom."

The implication of this technological echo chamber puzzled me. Why bother? Who's the audience? Is it possible that there are people so disadvantaged that they don't have access to a television or radio to watch or listen to a presidential debate but they do carry a BlackBerry to receive Twitter messages about the debate they can't watch or listen to?

I'm not complaining, really I'm not, because the brief factual summaries I was receiving were far superior to the other tweets that were spilling into my laptop. By one reliable count, Obama supporters on Twitter outnumber McCain supporters nine to one, and the imbalance was reflected in the comments scrolling down my screen. Sarcasm was big, as it generally is with people who are too mad to be funny. "Ooooh, eliminating bureaucracy!" sneered SARDO. "A bold and original suggestion from McCain!"

The deadpan, affectless humor of the millennial generation was also in evidence. "How come McCain's bald spot doesn't shine?" Suzannekart pretended to wonder. "My dad's bald spot shines."

"could mccain be an evil little hobbit?" tweeted someone calling himself Shaddock.

But mostly I enjoyed reading the wordslingers of the press corps. On Twitter, there are fewer words to sling, but some of the journalists were chattier than others. I got to like an earnest woman named Kate Phillips from the *New York Times*, who, considering she works for the *Times*, was remarkably level-headed. Every four or five minutes she'd chime in with a comment that was as inoffensive as it was pointless: "will the economy get worse?" she wondered. "the candidates need to be careful not to cause more market and fear."

"McCain's now in town hall mode—where he's been a natural—as he talks about his tax plans," Kate reported. "Obama wants to respond."

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And then she offered a little of that analysis that the *Times* is famous for: "their differences on health care may be the singlemost voter touchstone, aside from mortgages."

It was a bit like watching a baseball game with a dotty uncle. "Oh, he's swinging now, hits the ball with the bat, there he goes, better slide …"

The *New Yorker*'s pop music critic was Twittering too. "That small business jack was lame," wrote an outraged Sasha Frere-Jones, after one exchange about the economy. "McCain is the Kanye of politicians and Obama is Daft Punk. Also, Obama knows how to walk."

Sasha wasn't the only one to enrich his tweets with cultural allusions. My hours with Twitter demonstrated yet again that baby boomer journalists and their younger colleagues can effortlessly summon references from what must be, for them, the entire spectrum of Western culture: from *Lost in Space* to the Dave Matthews Band, from the New Frontier to *Get Smart*, you name it. They didn't take all those "American Studies" classes for nothing.

TheFix from the *Washington Post* offered stage criticism—"McCain is doing a weird stand/sit on his stool when Obama is answering questions. Looks odd"—and was particularly fond of quoting Bruce Springsteen lyrics. The tweets from the staff of *Slate* made the obligatory Seinfeld allusion ("When did McCain become such a close talker?") before opening up their can of snark: "There appears to be a correlation between being an undecided voter and wearing a goatee. Which actually sort of makes sense"

The unanimity was more than a matter of style. Tweeting journalists experience the same mind-meld that makes their non-tweeting colleagues so uninteresting and predictable. Even a revolutionary technology like Twitter can't change that. At the end of the debate, no fewer than four of the reporters chose the same insta-cliché to describe the debate. It had not, they announced, been a "game changer." Almost all complained that the "town hall" format wasn't really a town hall. And when McCain made a clumsy reference to the telegraph, the mirth was widely shared. Everyone sophisticated enough to tweet knows that McCain is really, really old and out-of-it. *Time* magazine's twinkly Twitterer tweeted, with nearly 70 characters to spare: "The 'telegraph,' of course, is the form of telecommunications that McCain is most familiar with"

Maybe that's so. If it is, I hope the old fellow knows how lucky he's been. ♦

To Attack, or Not to Attack?

The cultural contradictions of McCainism.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Waukesha, Wisconsin

At a town hall in this conservative suburb of Milwaukee last Thursday, a middle-aged man took the microphone and claimed to speak for the 4,000 others gathered in a gymnasium to hear from John McCain and Sarah Palin.

"Everyone here is tickled at what you're doing for us," he said. "We're all wondering why Obama is where he's at—how he got here. Everybody in this room is stunned that we're in this position! We're all products of our associations! Is there not a way to get around this media and line up the people that he has hung with?"

The crowd roared its approval.

McCain's answer focused on just one person Obama has hung with.

> Look, we don't care about an old washed-up terrorist and his wife, who still, at least on September 11, 2001, said he still wanted to bomb more. That's not the point here. The point is Senator Obama said he was just a guy in the neighborhood. We know that's not true. We need to know the full extent of the relationship because of whether Senator Obama is telling truth to the American people or not—that's the question.

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Although the questioner had raised Obama's associations, he hadn't directly mentioned Bill Ayers, the man McCain chose to discuss. Ayers is the Weather Underground terrorist who has had friendly relations with Barack Obama for more than a decade. And though Sarah Palin had accused Obama of "palling around" with Ayers, and other McCain campaign officials had discussed him, McCain himself had not. So it was an aggressive answer and the audience loved it.

Moments later, though, McCain seemed to have a change of heart. James T. Harris, a black conservative who hosts a local radio show, told McCain that he had taken an "ass-whoopin'" for supporting the Republican over Obama and implored McCain to fight harder. "We have the good Reverend Wright. We have [the Reverend Michael] Pfleger. We have all of these shady characters that have surrounded him," Harris shouted. "We have corruption here in Wisconsin and voting across the nation. I am begging you, sir. I am begging you. Take it to him!"

The crowd, which had been energized before McCain's arrival by a lengthy stemwinder from former Wisconsin governor Tommy Thompson, applauded wildly and stood ready to explode as McCain began to answer.

"Yes, I'll do that," McCain said quickly and dismissively. "But I also, my friends, want to address the great-

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est financial challenge of our lifetime with a positive plan for action that Senator Obama and I have. We need to restore hope and trust and confidence in America and have Americans know that our best days are ahead of us. That's the future and strength and beauty of America."

The crowd seemed confused. Are Obama's "shady characters" relevant or not? In the space of about ten minutes, John McCain seemed to be saying "yes" and "no."

Such contradictions have become a defining characteristic of the McCain campaign over the last month as his strategists try to find something—anything—that will stop his slide in the polls. He suspended his campaign and threatened to skip the first presidential debate unless there was agreement on a bailout plan. There was no agreement, and he debated anyway. He said big government caused the current financial mess and then called for more of it. He called for a federal spending freeze and then proposed having the Treasury buy individual home mortgages at a potential cost of $300 billion.

It is, in short, a campaign heavy on tactics and light on strategy. Three weeks out from the 2008 election and John McCain's campaign has no discernible central theme, no succinct answer to the most basic question voters ask as they consider their choice: Why should I choose you over the other guy?

Four years ago, George W. Bush's critique of John Kerry was a simple, two-pointed attack: He's too liberal and he flip-flops. "Much as he tried to obscure it, on issue after issue, my opponent showed why he's earned the ranking, the most liberal member of the United States Senate," Bush said at a campaign event on October 9, 2004. Top aides Karen Hughes and Karl Rove circulated among the press pointing out that Kerry had voted for the resolution authorizing a war in Iraq that he had come to oppose and telling reporters that Kerry "really is a liberal who is out of touch with mainstream America."

Ask McCain advisers for a succinct description of his message, and you'll get several different answers. Obama's too risky. He's too inexperienced. He has bad judgment. He's not bipartisan enough. He has no record. His record is too liberal. He avoids tough decisions. He's all rhetoric. He's the wrong kind of change. And on it goes. Many of these things are true, of course, but in trying to communicate all of these messages at once the campaign risks communicating none of them.

The Obama campaign, by contrast, seems to have settled on one message, which it is driving nearly every day: John McCain is too erratic to be president.

Even for voters not inclined to believe the charge, McCain's last month has lent it credibility.

By the end of the week, however, conversations with several McCain advisers indicated that the campaign may have settled on its closing argument. If they are successful, voters will enter polling stations with this thought in their head: Barack Obama cannot be trusted because he's done nothing and has consistently put his own political ambitions before his country's needs. ♦

Manhattan Project as Metaphor

And a very misleading one. BY ARI RABKIN

At the "town hall" presidential debate last week, moderator Tom Brokaw asked if, in the interest of coming up with alternative forms of energy, we should "fund a Manhattan-like Project . . . or 100,000 garages across America, the kind of industry and innovation that developed Silicon Valley." John McCain, while supporting government-funded research, endorsed the latter approach, saying that we should "obviously" leave product development to the private sector.

Barack Obama appears to have the opposite view. During the debate, he asserted that "when JFK said we're going to the Moon in 10 years, nobody was sure how to do it, but we understood that, if the American people make a decision to do something, it gets done." And earlier this year, he told a CNBC interviewer explicitly that he had in mind as president "a Manhattan Project to embark upon that new energy future that we need." In last week's debate, he said that "we're going to have to make an investment, the same way the computer was originally invented by a bunch of government scientists" trying to meet military needs. This is a very distorted view. As it happens, most of the computing technology we use today was developed by private enterprise or by academic researchers with a great deal of independence.

The Manhattan Project, though, was unquestionably a triumph of government planning and engineering. A vast program of research, development, and production was brought to completion in three and a half years, culminating in the successful deployment of a radically new weapon, the atomic bomb, which brought the Second World War to a rapid end. But those who uphold the Manhattan Project as an exemplar of government success often forget that this achievement required methods we would not care to employ today.

The Manhattan Project required billions of dollars, much of America's top scientific talent, and a quarter of American electrical production. These resources were entrusted to the sole direction of General Leslie Groves, the project's director. Groves was subject to virtually no political oversight. His office issued no environmental impact statements. He decided, without any room for legal or other challenge, which

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technical risks to run, and which health risks to impose on the American public. Radiation was known at the time to be dangerous, and yet the Manhattan Project dispersed nuclear fallout across large areas of the West at the sole decree of General Groves.

Those demanding a new Manhattan Project seldom mean draft scientists into secret duty, spend a lot of money without public oversight, and damn the radiation leaks and other safety consequences. What they usually have in mind is an open spigot of tens or hundreds of billions of dollars to be spent on science and engineering and on subsidies for preferred technologies.

Such a program would have little in common with the Manhattan Project—and would have very poor prospects for success. Speakers who invoke the Manhattan Project or the moon landings as examples of project management imply that all difficulties are engineering difficulties and that these can be solved by a combination of lavish funding and government will. But if this were true, then Soviet and Chinese economic planning would have produced triumph, instead of disaster. Economies cannot be readily engineered. We would have difficulty even articulating our goals in detail, much less forming a coherent plan to achieve them.

A modern economy uses energy in many ways. Increased energy efficiency will require incremental improvements across the board, rather than breakthroughs in one particular technology. We cannot reliably predict how easy it will be to eke out gains in transportation, versus electrical transmission, versus manufacturing, versus residential illumination. Far better to set up incentives for efficiency and get out of the way.

The same holds true in microcosm in many areas. Consider transportation. There are many competing goals: fuel efficiency, safety, performance, low production costs, and more. There are many potential solutions: hydrogen cars, electric cars, hybrid cars, trains, buses, and so forth. We are much better off, as a society, allowing individuals, businesses, and local governments to explore various options, rather than trying to pick one approach, and enforce it by decree. Government planning decisions produced the freeway-oriented development of the last 30 years so often decried by the left. There is no reason to believe that future government policies will be any wiser or more durable.

The computer industry, in which I've been working for the last few years, demonstrates that without government mandates or supervision, the private sector is able to make significant efficiency gains. For the last several years, increased energy efficiency, has become a major goal of the industry. This has been driven not simply by a desire to be climate-conscious, but because it makes good economic sense. Energy is a major cost for companies such as Google and IBM that have hundreds of thousands of computers running all the time. These efficiencies came not from pouring money into the search for one technical breakthrough, but from incremental improvements in many different systems and components.

The Manhattan Project was oriented to a narrow goal: build an atomic bomb, as fast as possible, at any cost. This is a terrible model for economic planning, or even for environmentally conscious or consumer-oriented engineering projects. We don't want fuel efficient cars "at any cost"—a great many costs, both economic and noneconomic, must be factored in and weighted. Correctly weighting the importance of various goals is difficult and is what makes engineering management an art. Large all-encompassing development projects often founder where a swarm of smaller efforts might succeed. The latter describes the computer industry, one of the most successful parts of the American economy. To develop solutions for large-scale national problems, we should try to emulate the computer industry—those 100,000 garages—rather than our wartime command economy.

Research and development are worthy investments. There may even be a role for government subsidy to encourage solution of national problems. But an increase in science funding, spread across dozens if not hundreds of research groups, is a far cry from "a new Manhattan Project." It will inevitably devolve into a vehicle by which Congress can funnel money to favored home-state institutions, rather than a tool for putting money where it will do the most good. When Congress sought to promote space research two decades ago, the result was the Space Grant program. This program spread funding across all 50 states, and across such institutions as the University of Delaware and Brevard Community College in Florida. Such a program may have virtues, but efficiency is not among them. Any "new Manhattan Project" oriented to funding research risks likewise becoming an all-purpose tool for funneling federal dollars to favored academic constituencies.

Tennessee senator Lamar Alexander has a favorite anecdote about his predecessor Kenneth McKellar's support for the original Manhattan Project. Asked to hide a $2 billion appropriation, Senator McKellar responded, "Mr. President, I have just one question: Where in Tennessee do you want me to hide it?" Many of those backing "new Manhattan Projects" doubtless are likewise motivated by the opportunity to spend billions of dollars without being asked any hard questions. Succumbing to this urge will not help overcome national challenges.

Putting aside crass self-interest, most calls for a "new Manhattan Project" are rooted in the perennial fantasy that centralized government planning cures all social ills. This is the philosophy that leads to appointing enough "energy czars" and "drug czars" to fill out a dynasty—and most of these czars have been about as successful as the Romanovs or their successors.

If fuel efficiency is a national priority, by all means, let us tax fuel. If research for its own sake is a goal, we can offer tax credits for corporate grants to researchers. But the phrase "new Manhattan Project" obscures more than it reveals and misleads more than it inspires. The phrase provides cover for all-but-limitless spending of an unusually misguided sort, while offering the public a specious reassurance that nothing more need be done. ♦

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Will It Be a Blue Bluegrass State?

The Democrats' war on Mitch McConnell.

BY JOHN DAVID DYCHE

Louisville

In 2004, South Dakota voters ousted Tom Daschle despite his status as the Senate's Democratic leader. Kentucky Democrats have dreamed of doing a "Daschle in reverse" to Mitch McConnell ever since he became the Senate Republican leader in 2006. Recent polls suggest the once far-fetched fantasy could become shocking reality in the Bluegrass State.

McConnell's opposition for a fifth term is multimillionaire Bruce Lunsford. The mild-mannered incumbent seemed secure until the financial system started to disintegrate. A pair of late September, pre-bailout polls put Lunsford within 3 percentage points and 1 percentage point, respectively. While a Rasmussen poll has since given McConnell a 9-point advantage, the economic turmoil has left him more vulnerable than at any time since his first reelection bid in 1990.

A McConnell loss could drop the GOP's Senate seat count below the all-important 41 required to continue the successful two-year tactic of blocking bad Democratic bills by means of filibuster. The Kentucky race could thus determine whether 2009 will be the dawn of an utterly unchecked Obama-Pelosi-Reid liberal axis dominating the federal government.

Things would be even worse for McConnell if commonwealth Democrats had a decent candidate. But stronger foes, like congressman Ben Chandler, passed on the race because of McConnell's fundraising prowess, his reputation for ruthless campaigning, the federal largesse his earmarks have showered on Kentucky, and the state's decidedly red coloration in the presidential contest. Lunsford lost badly in the last two Democratic gubernatorial primaries, but he at least had name recognition and could finance his own campaign.

After serving as an apparatchik for former governor John Y. Brown Jr., Lunsford made a fortune in the nursing home business. His company, Vencor, flourished until 1997 when Medicare reimbursement changes drove it into bankruptcy. Lots of local shareholders lost lots of money. Lunsford's legacy also includes a federal false claims case settled for $104.5 million and plenty of bad publicity for evicting Medicaid residents and providing poor care.

But Lunsford emerged from the mess with fortune intact. He produced hip movies, raced thoroughbreds, and generally joined the international jet set, all while supporting Republican candidates, including McConnell and George W. Bush. Lunsford embarrassingly abandoned his 2003 gubernatorial bid when Chandler, the eventual Democratic nominee, hit him hard with an ad about Vencor's problems. He then angered the Democratic establishment by endorsing and working for the Republican victor, Ernie Fletcher.

Four years later, Lunsford tried, and lost, again, this time to Steve Beshear, whom McConnell had trounced for the Senate in 1996. Most figured his political career was over, but when no top-tier challenger to McConnell emerged, the lure of Lunsford's limitless pocketbook proved irresistible to Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) head Chuck Schumer. With characteristic cynicism, Schumer figured Lunsford could simply finance his way around a résumé replete with business failure, election losses, and contributions to Republicans.

McConnell's career has been on an uninterrupted upward trajectory for over three decades. Born in Alabama, where his mother's determination helped him conquer polio, and raised in Georgia, he moved to Kentucky as a teen. As a pro-civil rights campus politician at the University of Louisville, McConnell introduced Barry Goldwater at a 1962 campus appearance, but preferred the moderate William Scranton as the GOP's 1964 nominee.

The courtly Senator John Sherman Cooper was McConnell's mentor. Remembered as John F. Kennedy's best Republican friend in the Senate and a critic of President Nixon's policy in Vietnam, Cooper took his former intern McConnell along to watch President Johnson sign the 1965 Voting Rights Act. After stints on the staff of another Kentucky Republican, Senator Marlow Cook, and in the Justice Department in the Ford years, McConnell went home with his sights firmly set on a Senate seat of his own.

He advocated aggressive campaign finance reforms after Watergate, but gradually changed his tune after experiencing the power of a hostile press in two terms as chief executive of Democratic-dominated Jefferson County, the state's largest. A humorous ad conceived by then-consultant Roger Ailes was the trademark of McConnell's 1984 Senate race. It showed baying bloodhounds trailing his opponent, Dee Huddleston, who had missed Senate votes to make paid speeches. The spot helped McConnell become the only Republican to defeat a Democratic Senate incumbent that year.

He rose through the ranks by performing unpleasant tasks well. McConnell led the opposition to campaign finance for years, clashing bitterly with John McCain in the process. He deftly handled the departure of Republican Bob Packwood, who obstructed a Senate ethics investigation of his boorish behavior. As McConnell climbed the greasy pole in Washington, he was also masterminding candidate recruit-

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ment and campaign strategy that transformed Democratic Kentucky into a bona fide two-party state.

Despite two undistinguished cycles atop the National Republican Senatorial Committee, he became whip in January 2003 after being reelected with a record percentage for a Republican Senate candidate in Kentucky. McConnell had prudently deferred to Bill Frist for majority leader when Trent Lott stepped down, but assumed leadership of the Republican conference after Frist retired. To his disappointment, however, the GOP had just become the minority after the corruption- and Iraq-inspired electoral debacle of 2006.

A master of Senate procedure, McConnell has run parliamentary rings around majority leader Harry Reid. He has held his fractious caucus together in using the Senate's supermajority rules to block the worst Democratic initiatives and improve the rest. He has consistently supported, and sometimes guided, the administration (in which his wife, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao, is the last member of the original cabinet) and called President Bush one of the greatest in American history.

McConnell began his reelection campaign with ads reminding proud and provincial Kentuckians that the state had produced only one other Senate party leader, Alben Barkley. Next he touted the slabs of federal bacon his ever increasing clout had allowed him to bring home to the relatively poor commonwealth. The campaign's next phase was all about energy, with McConnell chanting the mantra of "produce more, use less."

While Chao's tenure on Vencor's board has limited McConnell's ability to attack Lunsford on that front, he savaged him on several others, including the magnate's homes in multiple states. Lacking a loyal base, a political identity, and any consistent line of attack, the Democrat floundered. McConnell got much the better of his poorly prepared rival in an unmoderated and untelevised mano-a-mano debate. Although Lunsford's ads sharpened after he changed media consultants, it still looked like McConnell could coast home.

DARREN GYGI

Then the bottom fell out of the financial markets. McConnell found himself squarely in the middle of an emergency cleanup of a historic financial mess. He had been in Washington while the problem silently metastasized, and, fairly or not, scared and suffering citizens may blame him for it. His Kentucky Republican colleague Jim Bunning called it socialism, but McConnell played a leading role in passing the $700 billion bailout that further embittered voters.

McConnell's latest ads, reviling a Lunsford venture for providing shabby care to veterans, seem off-key in the current climate. In ordinary times his refusal to debate Lunsford on statewide television might be smart, but in these extraordinary ones it looks like he is hiding in fear. Always virulently anti-McConnell, the state's big newspapers in Louisville and Lexington are febrile and trembling with political bloodlust at the prospect of vanquishing their longtime nemesis.

Without a hint of irony, much less decency, the DSCC's debut ad in the race blasts McConnell for backing 1999 banking deregulation that Schumer himself called vital to America's future. But the content matters less than the fact that the DSCC now sees spending in Kentucky as a good investment. More outside money may soon follow.

Almost no one is actually for Lunsford. Labor, liberals, and "yellow dog" Democrats simply hate McConnell. This year that may be enough, but no one should make the mistake of counting out the man Kentuckians of both parties regard as the modern-day heir of Henry Clay. ♦

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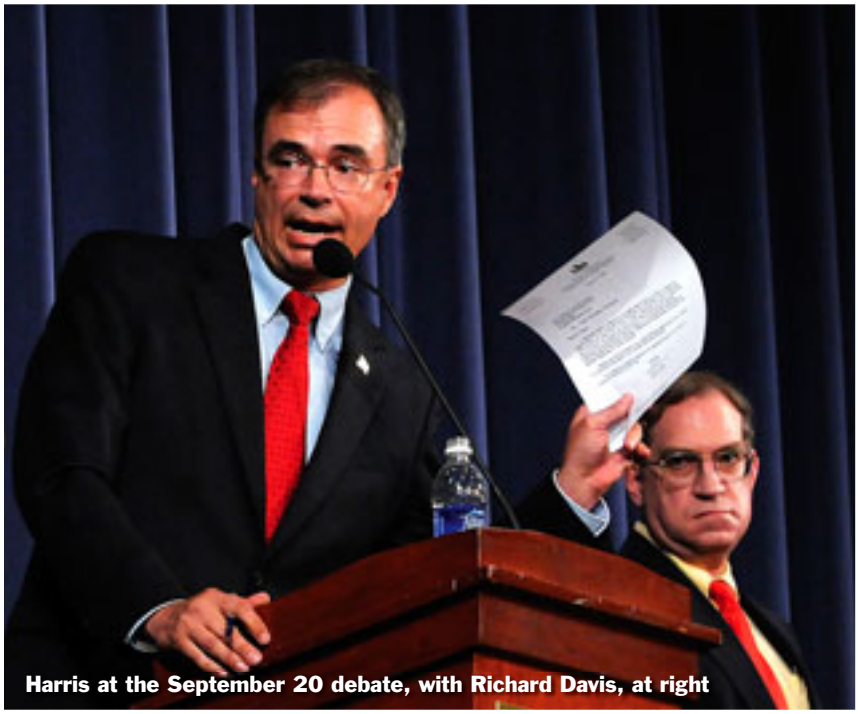
No Shore Thing

A Maryland GOP stronghold is under siege.

BY WHITNEY BLAKE



Harris at the September 20 debate, with Richard Davis, at right

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Maryland's first congressional district doesn't usually generate headlines. It's a reliably Republican district that a moderate, Wayne Gilchrest, has held comfortably for nine terms. Yet Gilchrest lost the Republican primary in February to the staunchly conservative Andy Harris—a three-term state senator from Baltimore County—by a 10-point margin (43.4 percent to 33.1 percent). The race for the unexpectedly open seat has garnered national attention, and big bucks, from both parties.

Gilchrest had seen off a number of primary challenges over the years thanks to his voting record—he broke with his party more than any other representative in 2007, for example, and was a prominent opponent of the surge strategy in Iraq. But, in 2008, the Club for Growth set its sights on Gilchrest and funneled over $1 million into the primary in support of Harris.

Gilchrest's defeat, though, caught the attention of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) who targeted this race, along with 21 other open seats, as part of its "Red to Blue" program. The DCCC went even further in September, announcing an ad commitment totaling over $1 million, after a poll showed the Democratic candidate Frank M. Kratovil—a second-term state's attorney for Queen Anne's County—dead even with Harris (36-36 percent, with 25 percent undecided).

The district, which encompasses the whole Eastern Shore and the noncontiguous conservative bits of Harford, Baltimore, and Anne Arundel counties on the other side of the Chesapeake Bay, is undeniably conservative. In 2000, Bush captured the district 57 to 40 percent; in 2004, he won 62 to 36 percent. The biggest reason for the competitiveness of the race is that Gilchrest endorsed Kratovil early in September and has been campaigning with him. The endorsement was a "catalyst for Democratic enthusiasm" in the race and raised Kratovil's profile, says David Wasserman of the *Cook Political Report*, which shifted the race from the "likely Republican" column to "lean Republican" on September 18.

Despite all this, Harris believes he has the race sewn up. He can come off as a bit cocky in person, dismissing the DCCC's large ad buys and constantly repeating the notion that the district is conservative and therefore he will win. Harris's campaign manager, Chris Meekins, admits that it is "going to be a close race," but reiterates that "if voters find out the differences between the two candidates, Harris is going to win."

Kratovil is well aware of this and has been campaigning as a Blue Dog Democrat. He touts his support for the compromise immigration bill that failed last year, his pro-gun policies, and his fiscal responsibility. At the first debate, on September 30, Kratovil spoke in Obama-esque platitudes, calling for "change" in Washington and an end to partisanship. He said the war was a mistake but opposed setting a timetable for withdrawal. He also proposed requiring everyone to have health insurance and using the federal government to expand coverage. He went after Harris on the environment, a key issue on the Eastern Shore.

Harris, 51, showed a commanding physical presence at the debate, standing at least a head taller than Kratovil, and even at times appearing menacing, speaking in a taunting, sarcastic tone. A member of U.S. Naval Reserve Medical Corps and veteran of the Gulf War, Harris hammered Kratovil for labeling the mission in Iraq an "occupation." He also attacked him for taking contributions from trial lawyers and for supporting tax hikes. When

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he accused Kratovil of refusing to prosecute sex offenders, drug dealers, and other criminals—without offering any specifics—he drew boos from the audience.

The economy was the hot topic at the debate, with Harris opposing the financial bailout and Kratovil countering by trying to tie him to big oil, lobbyists, and Wall Street greed. (The DCCC has been running an ad to reinforce these links.) Harris is sticking to his calls for tax cuts and the reform of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Kratovil has been endorsed by Democratic governor Martin O'Malley, and Harris was keen to associate Kratovil with the unpopular governor's tax hikes. Harris's campaign is also asserting that Kratovil will vote in lockstep with House majority leader Steny Hoyer—who is close with Kratovil's father—and DCCC chair Chris Van Hollen, both fellow Marylanders, though Kratovil tells me, "I'm going to be my own guy."

Kratovil has another local advantage besides the Gilchrest endorsement. He hails from the Eastern Shore, which has "tended to feel sometimes neglected by people in power in the state government," says Bill Flook, president of the 33rd District Democratic Club in Anne Arundel County, which encompasses part of the first district. "Frank is seen as one of their own," which could help him with undecided voters. David Wasserman, though, thinks that undecideds are more likely to break for Harris in such a conservative district. While Kratovil told me on October 1 that the election was "at least dead even," Wasserman puts Harris somewhere between the margin of error and a lead of 5 to 10 points.

The National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), which has not disclosed where it is focusing its ad money (but by all accounts has put nowhere near the $1 million that the DCCC has poured into the Harris-Kratovil race), is also sure of a Harris victory. Ken Spain, the NRCC's press secretary, says, "I'm very confident that [Harris] will win the race at the end of the day." ♦

NEWSCOM

A Faltering Big Red Machine

Republicans may lose their hold on Ohio's second district. BY DAVID WOLFFORD

Cincinnati

Ohio's second congressional district is up for grabs. A Republican stronghold for over 30 years, it stretches from Cincinnati's east side, up the Ohio River to Portsmouth. Rob Portman won it handily from 1993 through 2004, usually breaking 70 percent. But in 2005, Portman left the House of Representatives to serve in President Bush's cabinet, and 11 Republicans eager to represent OH-2 leaped into a special primary. Jean Schmidt, a social conservative and past state representative, beat 10 male contenders. That meant the hard fight was over, or so she thought.

Jean Schmidt

David Wolfford is a government and politics teacher and writer in Cincinnati.

Today the district is no longer safe. Schmidt barely won her two general elections—with 51.6 percent and 50.5 percent respectively. This November, Democrat Victoria Wulsin, a physician from the affluent Cincinnati suburb of Indian Hill, will challenge Schmidt for the second time.

Political analyst Stuart Rothenberg concluded earlier this year that OH-2 "may well be the worst congressional contest I've ever witnessed." As Election Day nears, he may drop the qualification.

Fairly or not, Rep. Schmidt soon earned a reputation for her stern manner. She stands 5′2″, with piercing eyes and hair tightly pulled back. Her fierce work ethic, intense persona, and sharp off-the-cuff comments have caused some to dub her "Mean Jean." Within three months of being sworn in, she ridiculed Rep. John Murtha (D-PA) on the House floor as she spoke against his resolution to redeploy U.S. troops from Iraq. Allegedly quoting a Marine from her district, Schmidt said to Murtha, "Cowards cut and run, Marines never do." The House erupted in hisses and boos. Murtha got scant support on his resolution, but doubtless more collegial support than Schmidt after the rookie representative unduly attacked the decorated Marine. *Saturday Night Live* parodied Schmidt in her trademark red, white, and blue as this became the gaffe that defined her.

If only it had been her last. She downplayed the revelations of inadequate provision for wounded veterans at Walter Reed Hospital, expressed openness to an unpopular nuclear waste site in her district, and

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has been under fire for misrepresenting a college degree.

Schmidt's challenger—who has an M.D. from Case Western Reserve and a doctorate from Harvard School of Public Health, has worked in public health management, and founded a charity combatting AIDS in Kenya—narrowly lost to Schmidt in 2006, taking 49.39 percent of the vote. But rather than running on her merits, Wulsin has chosen to run against Schmidt's mistakes. "Tired of the Schmidt!" she announced at one of her early press conferences. Her campaign committee is sponsoring a website, EmbarassedbySchmidt.com, that exposes the congresswoman's missteps. When asked how Wulsin differed from Schmidt, her spokesperson was quick to laud her as "more than an SNL skit."

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The wild card in this race will be independent David Krikorian, a Cincinnati entrepreneur of Armenian background with expertise in economics. He will have raised about $200,000 before the race is done, has five paid campaign staffers, and was the first candidate to go on television. He's received the endorsement of the Cincinnati Fraternal Order of Police. His own campaign's poll of Democratic and Republican primary voters showed Krikorian at 19 percent. His "Had Enough?" strategy includes refusing PAC money.

The outlook for Election Day is uncertain. A recent SurveyUSA poll commissioned by *Roll Call* shows Schmidt and Wulsin in a 48 to 40 percent split, with 10 percent declaring they'd vote for somebody else. But one thing is plain: The voters are not keen on either nominee. More look unfavorably upon them than favorably (Schmidt, 40 percent unfavorable to 35 percent favorable, Wulsin, 36 percent to 28 percent).

All three candidates appeared in a televised debate on October 6. Wulsin announced that she would "tell the truth" as a representative, subtly calling Schmidt's ethics into question, while Krikorian tried to capitalize on the public's disdain for Schmidt's vote in favor of the second attempt in the $700 billion rescue. Opined Krikorian, who knows the district, "Capitalism without bankruptcy is like religion without Hell."

The "I'm better than Mean Jean" strategy may work. Some local Republicans question whether she's the best person to represent OH-2, given her public image and her past close races including two challenges in Republican primaries. But while Schmidt is despised on the left and not beloved by all in her party, she is an acquired taste. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* has endorsed Schmidt on the eve of her past congressional elections, even while acknowledging her "tendency to step in it." Anyone who has met her sees her determination and passion for families.

"Dynamite comes in small packages," Terry Johnson, the Scioto County GOP chairman, says of Schmidt. The county party endorsed her in the primary. "She's our congresswoman. She's a beacon of conservative values. She's paid a lot of attention to us as a representative, and we really appreciate that," Johnson adds. Scioto is a swing county that often determines the outcomes of statewide elections in Ohio. Schmidt has also got quite a following in her home county of Clermont, though the number of registered Democrats there is on the rise.

The Democratic party has had its eye on OH-2 ever since Portman stepped aside. During the summer of 2005, the party sent resources and manpower into the district. Murtha has appeared in commercials in the past and will stump with Wulsin. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has added the district to its "Red to Blue" list of priority races, and we can expect advertising from both congressional campaign committees soon.

As far as presidential coattails go, Schmidt will presumably ride the district's overwhelming preference for McCain. Ohio could go either way, but this district wants McCain over Obama by 19 points. With that advantage and support from the party, Schmidt may well defeat Wulsin on November 4. Whoever wins, after November 4, the losing party will likely seek out a stronger candidate and prevent round three. ♦

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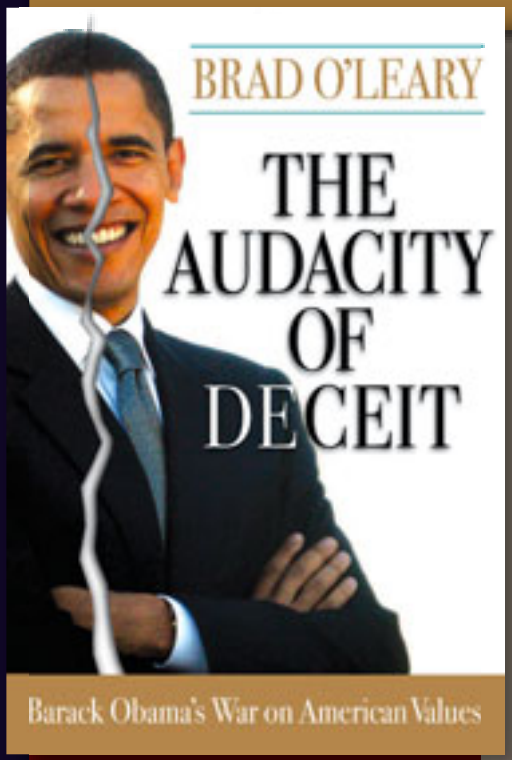

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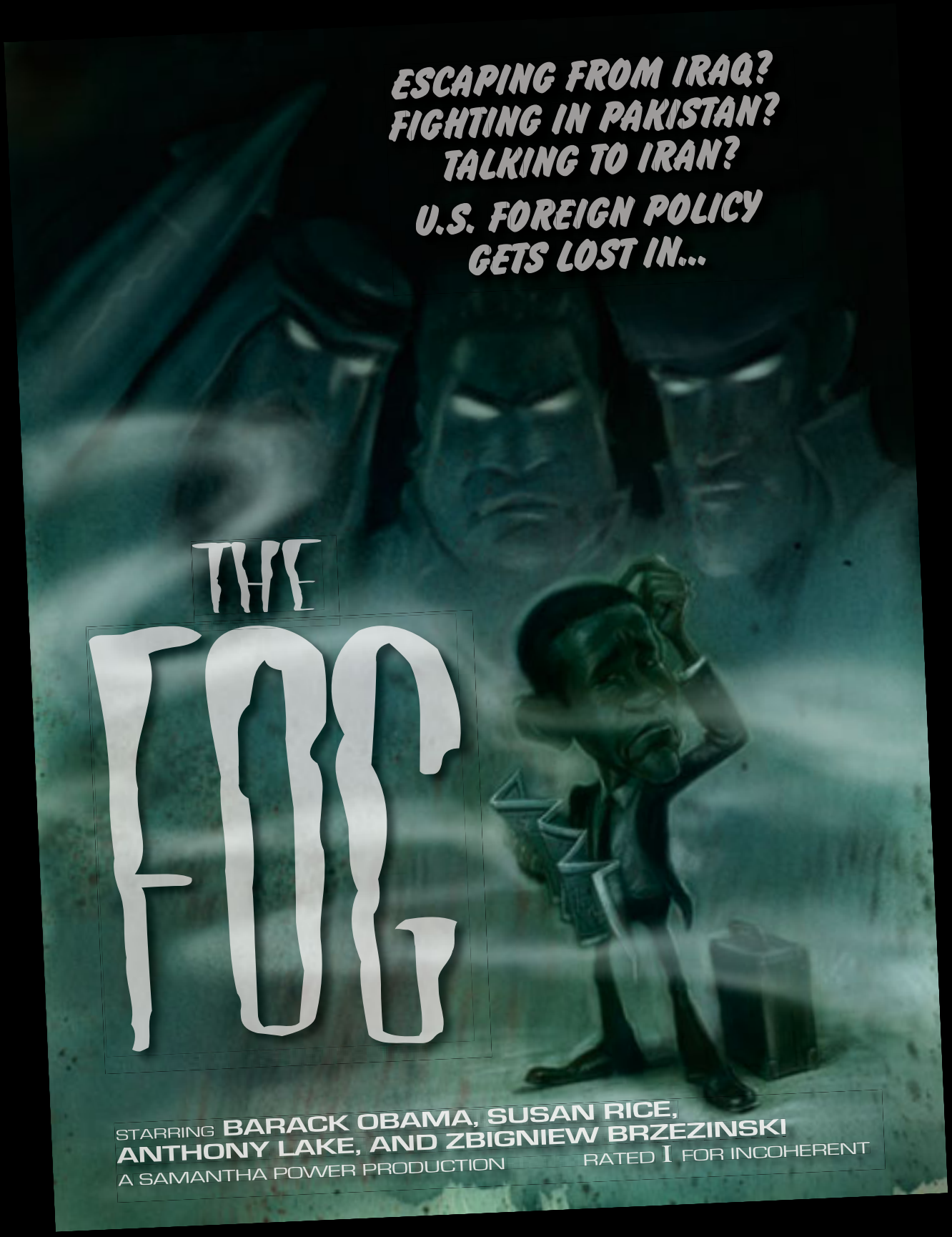

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***Frederick W. Kagan** translates Obama's vague foreign policy pronouncements: It's the Clinton administration in a more dangerous world.*

Discerning Barack Obama's foreign policy in any detail is far from easy. The great majority of his statements on the subject consist of criticism of the Bush administration. Asked during the first presidential debate how he sees "the lessons of Iraq," Obama replied, "I think the first question is whether we should have gone into the war in the first place." Later he added: "The strategic question that the president has to ask is not whether or not we are employing a particular approach in the country once we have made the decision to be there. The question is, was this wise?" The constant lamentation over Bush's mistakes, justified though it may be, leaves obscure what Obama thinks we should do now. A close examination of his pronouncements on foreign affairs nevertheless suggests the general outlines of his likely foreign policy. Like the Clinton administration, an Obama administration would set out determined to rely on diplomacy, backed where necessary by economic sanctions and, in some cases, limited and precise military strikes—the sole exception being Afghanistan, where Obama proposes an open-ended commitment of American troops to win on what he regards as the central front in the war on terror.

DIPLOMACY FIRST

Obama and his team have made it clear that they intend to rely on diplomacy to achieve most of their objectives in the world. Obama's declaration that he would meet with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad "without preconditions" defines his approach to the Iranian challenge. Asked in a 2004 debate with his Republican Senate opponent Alan Keyes how he would handle potential threats from Iran and North Korea, Obama answered, "Well, I think that we have to do everything we can diplomatically." Noting the failure of the international nonproliferation regime, he blamed U.S. strategy and the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which he said "has to be rewritten and renegotiated." In April 2007, he recognized that Iran and Syria "want us to fail" in Iraq: "I am under no illusions there." But given what he believes are common strategic interests, he continued, "It's absolutely critical that we talk to the Syrians and the Iranians about playing a more constructive role in Iraq." During the January 2008 debate with Hillary Clinton, Obama cited the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on the Iranian nuclear program as evidence that "if we are meeting with them, talking to them, and offering them both carrots and sticks, they are more likely to change their behavior."

Criticized for promising to meet with Ahmadinejad, Obama added nuance in the first presidential debate: "Ahmadinejad is not the most powerful person in Iran. So he might not be the right person to talk to." The conversation then descended into an argument about the meaning of "without preconditions," with Obama explaining: "It means … that we don't do what we've been doing, which is to say, 'Until you agree to do exactly what we say, we won't have direct contacts with you.' There's a difference between preconditions and preparations. Of course we've got to do preparations, starting with low-level diplomatic talks." It is not clear whether the Obama team envisages reestablishing full diplomatic relations with Iran. During the Cold War, the United States had full diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union—and negotiated with Moscow, as Obama often points out. Denis McDonough, Obama's foreign policy coordinator, noted in June 2008 that "every one of our European allies maintains full diplomatic relations with Iran. … So I am very confident that our European allies would welcome greater American engagement in this." It is extremely difficult to negotiate presidential-level summits when major issues are at stake even with full diplomatic teams in both capitals, so the question of Obama's intention to reestablish relations is important.

A similar emphasis on diplomacy characterizes Obama's approach to North Korea, Russia, and Lebanon. In May 2008, he responded to Hezbollah's attack on the Lebanese government by calling on "all those who have influence with Hezbollah … [to] press them to stand down," and added, "It's time to engage in diplomatic efforts to help build a new Lebanese consensus that focuses on electoral reform, an end to the current corrupt patronage system, and the development of the economy." His approach to North Korea is similar. In September, Susan Rice, senior foreign

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GARY LOCKE

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policy adviser to Obama, said that he "would have a tough policy that combines stronger sanctions, but to pursue this through diplomatic means to the maximum extent possible." Obama called for a "sustained, direct, and aggressive diplomacy" toward North Korea in an article in the July/August 2007 *Foreign Affairs*, and also proposed creating a more permanent "international coalition" to replace the "ad hoc" Six Party Talks the Bush administration has pursued.

Harsh words toward Russia following the invasion of Georgia in August were tempered by Obama's principal Russia adviser, Michael McFaul: "As a general philosophy, we are better off in direct negotiations with them, and trying to do things of mutual interest, versus isolating, containing them." On those grounds, Obama and his advisers have rejected the idea of expelling Russia from the G-8 and blocking its full accession to the World Trade Organization and continue to emphasize negotiating arms control agreements with Moscow aimed at reducing nuclear arsenals, making the current intermediate-range ballistic missile treaty global, and containing the dangers of nuclear proliferation from Russian scientists, among other things.

ECONOMIC STICKS AND CARROTS

Obama recognizes that diplomacy will not always achieve his objectives and that it cannot be successful on its own. In such cases, his preferred course of action is to adopt or increase punitive economic sanctions on the offending regime. In May 2007, he complained that Bush's sanctions package against Sudan was inadequate: "Conspicuously absent from this package of sanctions is maximal punitive action against the Sudanese oil industry. … Targeted pressure by the international community against the Sudanese oil economy is a much-needed step to stop the killing and displacement of innocent civilians in Darfur." Noting that Tehran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would be a "game changer" that "we cannot tolerate," Obama explained in the first presidential debate:

> Now here's what we need to do. We do need tougher sanctions. I do not agree with Senator McCain that we're going to be able to execute the kind of sanctions we need without some cooperation from countries like Russia and China that … have extensive trade with Iran but potentially have an interest in making sure Iran doesn't have a nuclear weapon.

In the second debate, he expanded on the theme:

> If we can work more effectively with other countries diplomatically to tighten sanctions on Iran, if we can reduce our energy consumption through alternative energy, so that Iran has less money, … if we can prevent them from importing the gasoline that they need and the refined petroleum products, that starts changing their cost-benefit analysis.

He has also proposed sanctioning Venezuela for supporting the FARC rebels in Colombia and supports tougher sanctions on North Korea for violating its various agreements to suspend its nuclear program. In June, Obama explained, "Sanctions are a critical part of our leverage to pressure North Korea to act. They should only be lifted based on North Korean performance. If the North Koreans do not meet their obligations, we should move quickly to reimpose sanctions that have been waived, and consider new restrictions going forward." In September, he supported maintaining the embargo on Cuba "until we are seeing clear signs of increased political freedom and so we can maintain leverage in any direct negotiations that may take place." He has also proposed raising tariffs on Chinese products to force China to revalue the yuan.

Where sanctions are inappropriate or impossible, Obama proposes to manipulate American foreign assistance to achieve similar goals. During the second debate, he proposed responding to the Russian challenge by giving Poland, Estonia, Latvia, "and all of the nations that were former Soviet satellites" "financial and concrete assistance to help rebuild their economies." He strongly backed the proposal of his running-mate, Joe Biden—subsequently echoed by the Bush administration—to give Georgia $1 billion in economic assistance. Since he rejected direct economic pressure on Russia, Obama seeks instead to create pressure by helping the economies of all of Russia's neighbors.

In the case of Pakistan, Obama calls for a policy that "compels Pakistani action against terrorists who threaten our common security." He would do that by conditioning U.S. military assistance on Pakistan's performance in the fight against al Qaeda. He would also offer economic assistance to "add to the standard of living and quality of life" in the tribal areas (in the words of Susan Rice) and to help in "building schools and building infrastructure in the country to help develop and give opportunity to the Pakistani people" (as Obama himself said in July).

Elsewhere in the world, Obama has proposed simply increasing American foreign assistance both for general purposes and in response to specific problems. He promised to "substantially increase our [economic] aid to the Americas" and proposed that the United States "help the Lebanese government deliver better services to the Shiites 'to peel support away from Hezbollah.'" He has not made clear how the Lebanese government will be able to do this in areas militarily controlled by Hezbollah. He summed up his approach by declaring, "The United States needs a foreign policy that 'looks at the root causes of problems and dangers.'" This sentiment echoes an earlier declaration about Latin America: "Helping to lift people out of widespread poverty is in our interests, just as it is in accord with our values."

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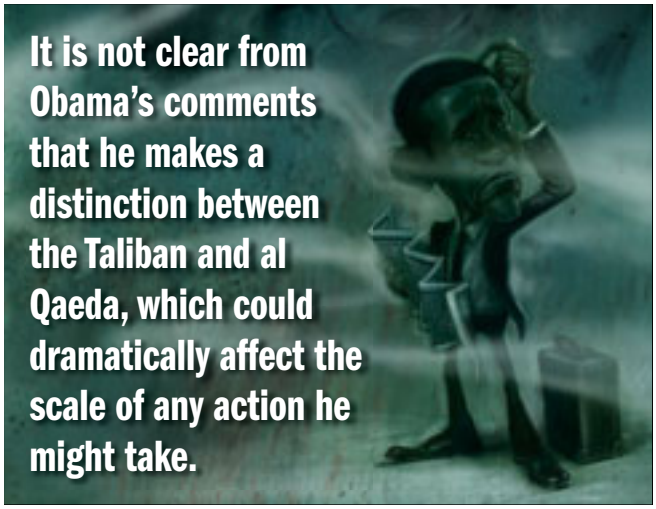
SMALL-FOOTPRINT, LIMITED MILITARY STRIKES

Obama has been at pains since 2002 to make clear that he doesn't oppose wars—he opposes "dumb wars." He has repeatedly emphasized his willingness, even eagerness, to use military force in certain cases, but he is unwilling to have American soldiers on the ground in numbers anywhere except Afghanistan. His objective in Iraq is to withdraw all American combat forces as rapidly as possible. As he said in July 2007: "The mission I'm defining is one in which we are withdrawing in a gradual fashion, that we are helping to train Iraqi forces, and that we're going to initiate diplomacy as a more important tool at this point than the surge in order to achieve our goals." Asked if he would give General David Petraeus more time if the American commander asked for it (this was before the general's September 2007 congressional testimony), Obama answered: "There is no scenario that I can imagine right now in which over the next eight weeks we'll see a magic transformation in Iraq." More recently, Obama and Susan Rice have reiterated his determination to "end this war responsibly" by withdrawing American forces—within 16 months, they've said on numerous occasions—leaving behind only enough troops to "protect our embassy and civilians operating in Iraq, continue any operations that may be necessary to target remaining al Qaeda remnants, and finally continue the mission of training the Iraqi security forces."



With regard to Iran, Obama says, "I would not take the military option off the table, and … I will never hesitate to use our military force in order to protect the homeland and the United States' interests." He explicitly rejected the idea of keeping military forces in Iraq to counter Iran in November 2007, however: "We should not take steps that would increase troop presence inside Iraq with an eye towards blunting the impact of Iran. I always think that's a mistake." In 2004, in fact, he argued that American forces in Iraq reduced our ability to strike Iran militarily: "I am less optimistic about … our ability to deal with the threat in Iran, in part as a consequence of Iraq. Because I think that the Iranians at this stage are fairly confident that it's going to be difficult for us to mount any significant military strike there, but I would reserve all options." The military option Obama has in mind for Iran—to the extent he considers it live at all—appears to be a limited precision-strike, presumably against the Iranian nuclear facilities.

Obama also favors limited military precision-strikes against al Qaeda safe havens in Pakistan. The parameters of such strikes are unclear. As controversy grew over whether Obama had or had not proposed "invading" Pakistan, the senator clarified his position, noting in the first debate: "If the United States has al Qaeda, bin Laden, top-level lieutenants in our sights, and Pakistan is unable or unwilling to act, then we should take them out." He subsequently added, however, "You've got cross-border attacks against U.S. troops [in Afghanistan]. And we've got a choice. We could allow our troops to just be on the defensive and absorb those blows again and again and again, if Pakistan is unwilling to cooperate, or we have to start making some decisions." This would appear to imply a willingness to hit not only al Qaeda targets, but also Taliban targets (since the Taliban stages by far the largest number of cross-border raids) in Pakistani territory. In almost all other conversations, however, both Obama and Susan Rice have been careful to say only that he would hit al Qaeda targets. It is not entirely clear from Obama's comments that he makes a distinction between the Taliban and al Qaeda, moreover, which could dramatically affect the scale of any action he might take.

Obama has made much of his determination to stop or prevent genocide around the world, even if it means using military power. In practice, however, he does not appear to support deploying American soldiers in any numbers to enforce this determination. In July, he denied that preventing genocide in Iraq was sufficient reason to keep large numbers of American forces there, adding, "By that argument you would have 300,000 troops in the Congo right now … which we haven't done. We would be deploying unilaterally and occupying the Sudan, which we haven't done. Those of us who care about Darfur don't think it would be a good idea." Earlier this month he spoke again of the genocide in Darfur and concluded by recommending "logistical support, setting up a no-fly zone," and helping the African Union troops to stop the killing.

For all of Obama's emphasis of the priority of Afghanistan over Iraq, he has offered very little in the way of

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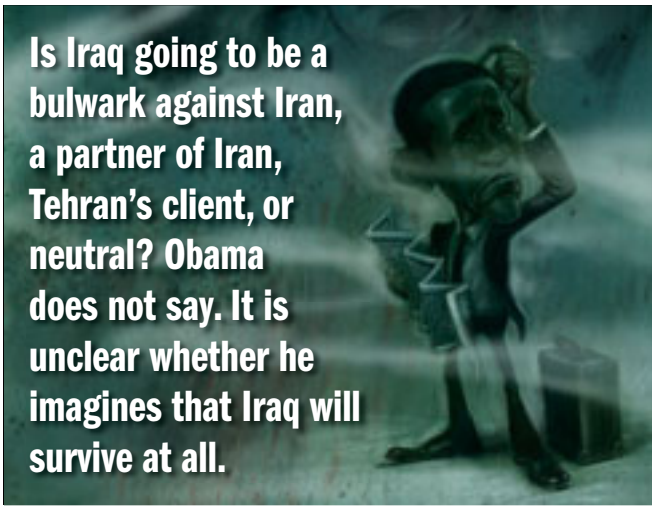
detailed proposals for winning the war there. In the second debate, he summed up the three points of his approach as being "to get more troops into Afghanistan, put more pressure on the Afghan government to do what it needs to do, eliminate some of the drug trafficking that's funding terrorism." In particular, he proposes sending "two to three additional brigades to Afghanistan." Getting those forces to Central Asia he believes is so important that we must "end the war in Iraq" in order to do it.

Obama's commitment to maintaining as many as seven U.S. combat brigades in Afghanistan (his additional three plus the three already engaged in combat and one in training Afghan security forces) appears to be limitless. He has not suggested that sending perhaps 10,000 more combat troops to Afghanistan (three combat brigades) would be decisive any time soon, nor has he explained how he would do better in combating the drug trafficking problem than the NATO forces that have been working on the problem since the start of the war, nor has he described how he would help the Afghan government become more effective. His approach to dealing with safe havens in Pakistan appears to combine economic aid for the surrounding areas with precision strikes against key leaders there.



In short, the surge of troops for Afghanistan Obama is proposing is likely to be anything but brief—his strategy appears to anticipate the need for at least 50,000 American troops in Afghanistan throughout his presidency, and probably more. It is not, in fact, a surge but a fundamental redeployment from an open-ended commitment in Iraq to an open-ended commitment in Afghanistan.

IRAQ

Obama's foreign policy plans do not appear to recognize that Iraq will continue to be an extremely important area of interest for the United States for years to come, whatever the outcome of the current conflict. Although Obama is at pains to describe the nature of America's relations with Islamabad, Beijing, Moscow, Caracas, Havana, Damascus, and Brussels, he does not describe the relationship he expects to see with Baghdad. Will Iraq be friendly toward the United States? The possibility in his plans that America might continue to train Iraq's military forces (but only if the Iraqis meet our benchmarks and requirements) suggests that Obama imagines at least a reasonably positive relationship. The determination to continue to use American Special Forces and precision weapons to whack terrorists in Iraq presupposes some sort of Iraqi permission. At least, Obama has not indicated that he would conduct such operations against the will of Iraq's government, as he has said he would do in Pakistan. Obama certainly does not see an American presence in Iraq as any sort of constraint on Iranian behavior there or anywhere else. Is Iraq itself going to be a bulwark against Iran, a partner of Iran, Tehran's client, or neutral? Obama does not say.

It is unclear, in fact, whether Obama imagines that Iraq will survive at all. He continues to assert that the surge has failed because "the Iraqis still haven't taken responsibility, and we still don't have the kind of political reconciliation" required, as he explained to Bill O'Reilly in September. His plan for Iraq claims that U.S. withdrawal will facilitate the rebuilding of Iraqi society: "A phased withdrawal will encourage Iraqis to take the lead in securing their own country and making political compromises, while the responsible pace of redeployment called for by the Obama-Biden plan offers more than enough time for Iraqi leaders to get their own house in order." He recognizes, however, that it may not work: U.S. forces will help train Iraqis "as long as Iraqi leaders move toward political reconciliation and away from sectarianism." If Iraq's leaders did start moving toward sectarianism, Obama's plan, it appears, would cut off U.S. assistance, but would not attempt to stop the violence. Only in the worst case would Obama intervene again, reserving "the right to intervene militarily, with our international partners, to suppress potential genocidal violence within Iraq." The Obama plan aims at forcing Iraqis to make their country work but appears ambivalent about the likelihood they will succeed—and would curtail relations with Iraq if the attempt failed, re-engaging only if there were a genocide.

This approach makes sense only on the assumption that Iraq is not intrinsically important to American security, while Afghanistan is the key. Obama seems willing to accept a failed and even violent state in Iraq while insisting on an open-ended commitment to establishing a peaceful, demo-

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cratic Afghanistan with a government that is "responsive to the Afghan people." Obama does not see Iraq as any sort of focal point for Iranian-American relations (except that he expects to talk the Iranians into helping us advance our supposedly common interests in Iraq). He most certainly rejects the notion of Iraq as an important front in the war on terror.

This approach is problematic. Iraq has never been irrelevant to the modern Middle East and won't be in the coming eight years. Iraq has oil reserves potentially as great as Saudi Arabia's; a large population astride the Sunni-Shia faultline; borders with Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait; a Kurdish population that both aspires to a region-shattering declaration of independence and harbors an anti-Turkish terrorist group; is the traditional center of Shia Islam; and suffers from two low-level terrorist campaigns waged by al Qaeda and Iranian proxies. Iraq, moreover, has not been part of the international community for 40 years. The rise of a new, Shia-dominated Arab state in Mesopotamia that attempts to rejoin the regional community will shake up Arab politics, whatever the success or failure of U.S. plans. As a first priority, an Obama administration will have to develop a more balanced approach to Iraq, one that recognizes the country's regional importance, considers the real nature of American interests there, and commits to one vision of Iraq's future and the Iraqi-American relationship.

RETURN TO THE 1990S

Obama's foreign policy principles are not new. Broadly speaking, they are a return to the principles that guided Bill Clinton's approach to the world, adjusted incompletely to the global changes that have occurred since Clinton left office. It is worth reviewing the Clinton foreign policy both as an indicator of how an Obama administration (which will incorporate many former Clintonites) will act and as a way of evaluating the likely success of some of Obama's proposals.

Having campaigned on the slogan "It's the economy, stupid," Clinton took office with American forces engaged in two theaters. In Iraq, they maintained no-fly zones, while concentrations of ground troops protected Kuwait. In Somalia, the ill-considered humanitarian relief effort launched by George H.W. Bush was drawing American forces into a civil war.

Clinton established the pattern for his relationship with Saddam Hussein at once. Following word of an attempted assassination of Bush during an April 1993 trip to Kuwait, Clinton ordered the launch of 23 cruise missiles against targets in Iraq. Meanwhile, determined to get American forces out of Somalia, Clinton's defense secretary Les Aspin refused the requests of U.S. leaders in the theater to send armored vehicles to U.S. troops operating in an increasingly dangerous environment. The refusal was based largely on the desire to avoid being seen as "escalating" American involvement in a conflict from which Clinton was attempting to escape. The result was that the United States did not have the capabilities necessary to rescue Special Forces shot down during an operation in October 1993. Some of those soldiers were subsequently captured, killed, and dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, turning the orderly withdrawal of American troops from Somalia into a humiliation.

Apprised of the likely costs of a war against North Korea during the first confrontation over Pyongyang's nuclear program in 1994, Clinton opted for diplomacy, negotiating the first of a series of deals to which today's Six Party Talks (and the ongoing Korean nuclear program) are the successor. Continuing the feckless policy of George H.W. Bush in the Balkans, Clinton pressed the Europeans to take responsibility for security on their own continent and worked to find a diplomatic, multilateral solution to the spiraling civil war and ethnic cleansing there. As U.N. forces in Bosnia were about to be overrun, Clinton intervened decisively, launching a large-scale air campaign in conjunction with our NATO allies and then deploying more than 20,000 American troops to Bosnia. Clinton continually promised that the deployment, to which many Republicans and some Democrats objected, would be short, but American troops remained in Bosnia from 1995 to 2005. Civil wars spread across the former Yugoslavia, arguably in part because of Western inaction early in the conflict, and in 1999 Clinton intervened again with a massive NATO air campaign against Serbia, followed by the deployment of U.S. ground forces to Kosovo, which remained there until 2007.

The Kosovo air campaign badly damaged relations with Russia, which regarded it as an illegal attack against Russia's traditional ally, Serbia. U.S.-Russian relations had been deteriorating before that attack, partly in response to the process of NATO enlargement begun in 1997, when Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary started talks with the alliance. The process culminated in their accession to full membership in 1999, 12 days before the war in Kosovo began. Russia, then as now, regarded the eastward expansion of NATO as a violation of a pledge Bush had given Gorbachev at the end of the Cold War. Then as now, Moscow linked NATO decisions in the Balkans to Russian operations in the Caucasus: Six months after the start of air operations in Kosovo, Russian president Boris Yeltsin appointed Vladimir Putin acting prime minister and almost immediately launched a large-scale military operation in Chechnya that brutally crushed a separatist movement there. Putin and other Russian leaders now commonly cite the U.S.-European recognition of Kosovo's independence earlier this year as the basis for their invasion of Georgia in August.

Clinton's policy toward Iraq—one of diplomacy, mul-

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tilateralism, economic sanctions, and spasmodic military action—was also counterproductive. Economic sanctions did fearful damage to the Iraqi economy and embittered a generation of Iraqis against the United States. The oil-for-food program established to alleviate the worst of the suffering backfired. Corruption marred the U.N. administration of the program, while Saddam redirected funds to his own comfort and security at the expense of his people. Continual low-level military confrontation, rising to air and cruise-missile strikes in 1996 and 1998, kept Saddam in perpetual fear of losing power. He responded with vicious suppression of Kurdish and Shiite uprisings immediately after the Gulf war, tightening of military and police controls throughout the country, and the "Return to Faith" campaign enlisting Islam to the cause of the secular Baathist regime.

The "Return to Faith" campaign focused heavily on Sunni Islam, and Saddam continued to oppress Iraq's Shia. The religious leader of the Shia community, Ayatollah Ali Sistani, went into seclusion; the more radical, more political, and fiercely anti-American Ayatollah Mohammed Sadeq al Sadr (father of Moktada al Sadr) was murdered by Saddam's thugs in 1999. The campaign also had the effect of injecting radical Islamism into Iraq's Sunni community.

By 2002, Saddam had made sufficient common cause with al Qaeda that Baghdad was home to Abu Musab al Zarqawi, who would head Al Qaeda in Iraq until the Coalition killed him in 2006, and Abu Ayyub al-Masri, Zarqawi's successor. Neither was involved in the 9/11 attacks, but both were intimately connected with the global al Qaeda movement with which they worked closely after the 2003 invasion. It appears that the surge has driven Masri out of Iraq, possibly to al Qaeda sanctuaries in Pakistan.

Even granting, therefore, that sanctions and military actions persuaded Saddam to eliminate his weapons of mass destruction programs, they did so at a very high price to the Iraqi people (which opponents of the 2003 invasion were prepared to continue to inflict indefinitely), and at the cost of driving a formerly bitter foe of Islamism to start making common cause with Islamists and radicalizing his own society. And even at that, U.S. policy before 2003 failed to secure Saddam's compliance with U.N. Security Council resolutions demanding unfettered inspections that would have demonstrated the end of his WMD program—with the result that almost every government and analyst believed that Iraq had a WMD program in 2003. Bush administration failures and mistakes seriously exacerbated many of these problems in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion and ended up imposing an additional fearful price on the Iraqi people and on America. Even a skillful war plan, on the other hand, would have faced the significant challenges arising from more than a decade of sanction-and-strike policies.

The single worst failure of the first Bush and Clinton administrations, however, is the one that appears most likely to be replicated by Obama. After Soviet military forces withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, the United States gratefully turned its attention away from a country it had never understood. We were surprised and dismayed but unwilling to act when the Soviet puppet-government did not fall at once, but instead held onto power until 1992. We were equally surprised, dismayed, and unwilling to act as the radical Taliban forces—including some groups we had helped arm and train against the Soviets—began to take control of Afghanistan, assisted by Pakistan.

As Osama bin Laden established base camps with Taliban support, Americans took little notice and no action. When al Qaeda bombers hit U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the Clinton administration launched a volley of cruise missiles against targets in Afghanistan (and Sudan), with no effect. It handed over to the second Bush administration a well-established terrorist network with unfettered access to resources and training bases in Afghanistan, and it had made no preparations to do anything about it—not even a war plan for going after al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Eight months after Bush took office—and eight years after the first World Trade Center bombing—al Qaeda terrorists flew planes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Pennsylvania. As policy failures go, that was rather dramatic. The unwillingness of the Obama campaign to think seriously about what happens in Iraq after our forces have withdrawn raises the specter of a repetition of this scenario.

If Obama takes office in January 2009, he will face a daunting set of challenges in the world. After the knife-fight of this presidential election, he and his team will need to take a deep breath and reflect. The temptation to excoriate the policies of one of the most unpopular presidents in history as a means of winning office was natural. The fierce battle Obama had to fight to secure the nomination in the first place created cleavages within the Democratic foreign policy elite that have further complicated the development of a coherent and consistent approach to national security. And the bitterness of the debate over the Iraq war has distorted the thinking of almost every political leader and many an analyst. Between an Obama election and inauguration, the new team will have to make up the ground the campaign has lost in thinking through its policies on the issues it will have to tackle from its first moment in office, for there is reason to fear that many of the current default policies are mistaken. The world has changed a great deal since the Clinton years, and even then the Clinton foreign policy was far from successful. Obama and his team will have a very short time to adjust their ideas to the world as it is now. ♦

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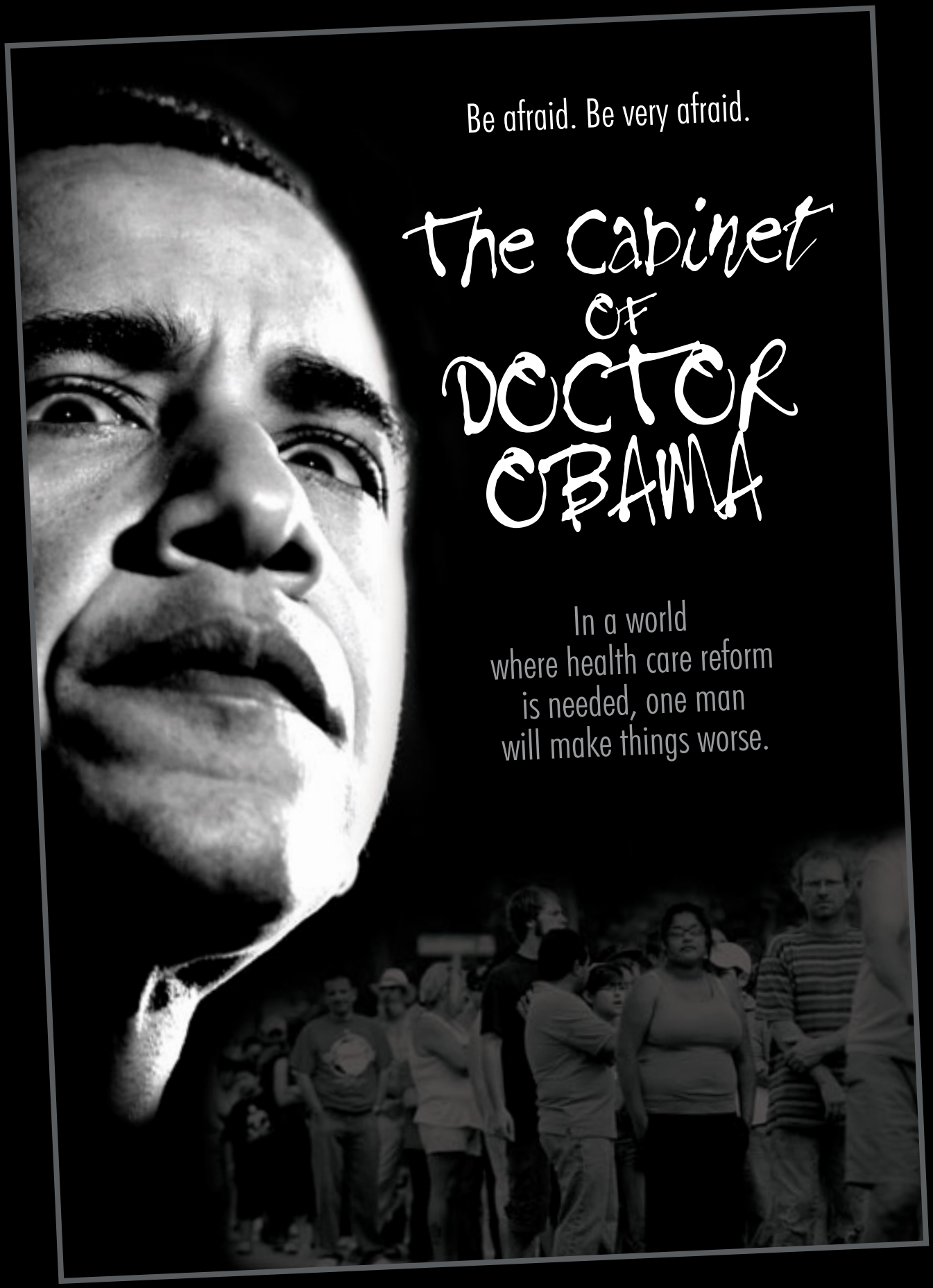

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Yuval Levin *dissects the health care proposals of Obama and McCain*

Over the past few weeks, in a series of television ads, in stump speeches, and in the presidential and vice presidential debates, the Obama campaign has sought mightily to attack John McCain's proposal for health care reform. It's vehemence and tenacity have been striking, especially given how little McCain himself has actually had to say about his plan. Ironically, their misleading critiques actually hint at the strengths of McCain's proposal, and point to the serious vulnerabilities in Obama's own approach to health care politics.

At the core of the McCain health care agenda is the most important conservative policy innovation since welfare reform: the transformation of the benefit now given to employer-provided health coverage into a health insurance tax credit made available to all. For almost 70 years now, the federal government has given a significant tax preference to employer-provided health insurance. When your employer takes money out of your wages to purchase coverage on your behalf, the money is not counted as part of your gross income, so you don't pay any taxes on it. But if you purchase insurance yourself, not through an employer, the money you use to do so gets taxed.

This makes employer-provided insurance vastly more appealing and places a serious burden on those to whom it is not available or who prefer coverage other than what their company offers. It has prevented the development of a genuine market in individually purchased health insurance and therefore artificially keeps insurance costs high. It has kept consumers from having a clear sense of what their health care costs, and so has inflated the price of care itself as well as the price of coverage. It has severely reduced the options available to families, making it more difficult to find insurance that meets their particular needs. It has tied health insurance to employment, leaving people uncertain about career moves and insecure about the future of their coverage. And it has vastly increased the number of Americans without health insurance, since not every business can afford to provide coverage, and those whose employers don't offer it cannot readily find affordable options on their own.

And yet, for all its troubles, the employer-based system is quite popular with the people it serves. Nearly 90 percent of them, in a recent Kaiser Foundation poll, rated their insurance as good or excellent. They would certainly like to see costs go down and to feel more secure about their coverage, but they do not want their existing coverage taken away from them. This obviously poses an enormous challenge for reformers: How can the problems of the current system be addressed without displacing the millions of Americans who are satisfied with it?

The McCain solution is to change the incentives for consumers, but not for employers, so that people find themselves with more options, but are not forced out of their current insurance arrangement. Rather than exempt from taxation all the money used by employers to buy insurance, he would treat it as income but then provide individual taxpayers (regardless of how they obtain their coverage) with a credit that more than covers the taxes. The effect of this, from the point of view of individuals and families, would be to make employer-provided coverage just one option among many.

All American taxpayers, regardless of whether they now have health insurance or where they get it, would receive a $2,500 health care tax credit ($5,000 per family) under McCain's plan. If you now have health insurance through your employer and would like to keep it, you can do that and the economics of the arrangements would change only slightly, and (for all but the top 5 percent of taxpayers) for the better. The money your employer takes out of your wages for your insurance would be taxed, but the new credit would more than cover the additional taxes, leaving you with the insurance you have now, and with a little more money in your pocket at tax time (between $700 and $1,600, according to the estimates of the Tax Policy Center). Things don't change for your employer, and they get a little better for you.

In last week's town hall debate, Barack Obama attacked this feature of the plan as an example of "one hand giveth and the other hand taketh away." But the giving and the taking occurs only on your income tax form, and in the end

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you're left with the insurance you want to keep and more of the money you've earned. The point of all the giving and taking, meanwhile, is to make options available for those not satisfied with the current system, or not served by it.

If you now receive insurance coverage from your employer but are unhappy with it or would rather find coverage that stays with you through different jobs or better suits your family's needs on your own, the McCain plan would give you the same tax benefit for insurance you choose as you now get only for insurance your employer chooses. If you decline your employer's insurance, the portion of your wages spent on coverage becomes regular take-home pay, which you can use to buy insurance. The additional wages are taxed, but again the new credit would cover those taxes and even leave you with a little extra. You would have just as much money to spend on insurance as your employer did. In addition, the McCain plan would vastly increase the scope of competition in the individual insurance market by permitting insurers to sell policies across state lines. It would thus create both new buyers and new sellers and start to build a genuine individual insurance market, which would bring down costs.

Finally, if you don't have insurance at all now, the new tax credit would put your family $5,000 closer to affording it. Most of the uninsured are not poor (or else they would qualify for Medicaid), and for many families without coverage an extra $5,000 and a real market to buy in would make the difference and allow them to obtain health insurance. A recent analysis of the McCain plan by noted health care economist Roger Feldman and a team at Health Systems Innovation (HSI) found that it would reduce the number of uninsured Americans by 27 million—well over half of the present total—and all without forcing anyone who now likes their coverage to lose it.

The McCain approach essentially puts employer-purchased and individually purchased health insurance on a level playing field, giving people more options and a better chance to find and afford the coverage they need.

The Obama campaign's attacks on the plan have mostly sought to confuse the public about its benefits by speaking about the parts without acknowledging the whole. Senators Obama and Biden both mentioned the taxation of health benefits in recent debates, and their campaign has run ads pointing to it as well, but all have failed to note the tax credit that more than makes up for it. The net tax burden on middle class families *declines* under the McCain plan, while insurance options improve. If they do mention the tax credit, they suggest it is all that families would have if they left their employer coverage—as Joe Biden put it in his debate with Sarah Palin, you would have to "replace a $12,000 plan with a $5,000 check you just give to the insurance company." But that ignores the simple fact that employer-purchased health care is purchased with employee wages. Right now, employers pay workers less in cash wages because they pay so much in premiums. With McCain's reform, workers who opt out of coverage will get more take home pay and a tax credit to more than make up for lost employer contributions to health care.

But perhaps the most dishonest charge concerns the prospects for the employer-based system itself. The Obama campaign has implied that McCain's plan would unravel the system and cause workers to be dropped from their employers' health plans. "Twenty million of you will be dropped," Joe Biden said in the vice presidential debate. In fact, the McCain plan does not alter the basic financial incentives facing employers. Workers might choose to leave employer coverage, but the McCain plan would not force them out.

Indeed, it is Barack Obama's health care plan that raises the prospect of masses being dropped from the employer-based insurance system, and his vulnerability on this crucial front may explain some of his intense defensiveness on health care. In the second presidential debate, Obama sought to address this concern through a brazenly misleading depiction of his own plan. "If you've got a health care plan that you like, you can keep it," he said. "All I'm going to do is help you to lower the premiums on it." But you can only keep your plan if your employer doesn't eliminate it, and Obama's health care proposal, unlike John McCain's, gives your employer a powerful incentive to do just that.

Where McCain seeks to address the problems of our health insurance system by building a market for private individuals, Obama seeks to do so by building a public-insurance system. His plan would force all but the very smallest businesses to either provide insurance coverage that meets the plan's requirements (which the Obama campaign has not specified, but would surely involve extensive particular coverage mandates like those in the federal employee health plan, which exceed what most popular employee plans provide today), or pay a tax to the government. Many employers would thus face the choice of increasing their insurance costs to comply with the new coverage requirements or dropping their workers' coverage. Obama, meanwhile, would create a new government-run insurance program (funded by the new tax on employers who don't offer coverage) that would compete with private companies to cover people who are not insured by employers.

In effect, the Obama plan creates an incentive to drop employees from existing plans, and then takes private

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insurers out of the race to cover them by using price controls to make the public option cheaper. The plan's goal is to drive Americans into a public Medicare-like insurance system by default.

The effect would be dramatic. An analysis by the Lewin Group suggests this approach would result in between 32 million and 52 million people moving from employer-provided coverage to the public system (depending on the rate of the "pay or play" tax on employers, which the Obama campaign has yet to specify). A recent analysis by HSI argues that "The offering of a public health plan will practically eliminate the group market medium PPO plan design that has been the most popular [employer-based] plan to date."

The Obama plan would also cost more than $400 billion a year, would impose a new burdensome tax on employment through the pay or play provision at a time of already rising unemployment, and, according to the Tax Policy Center, would increase the health care costs of taxpayers in the top 40 percent of the income range. All of this, HSI estimates, will reduce the number of uninsured Americans by about 25.5 million people, while McCain's plan would reduce it by more than 27 million.

Simply put, Barack Obama's criticisms of the McCain health care plan—that it would raise taxes and decimate employer-based coverage—apply far better to his own proposal.

The case for McCain's plan can be made very plainly: If you like your coverage as it is, the plan will let you keep it and you will pocket a little more money at tax time. If you don't like your coverage now, the plan will give you a lot more options to choose from and let you use the same money your employer now uses to pay for them. And, if you don't have insurance today, the McCain plan will offer you more options, reduce costs in the market for individual insurance, and put you $5,000 closer to having health insurance. Obama's plan would push tens of millions of people out of private insurance they like and into a vast government program. It would, moreover, raise taxes on hiring in hard economic times and break the federal budget.

It is John McCain, not Barack Obama, who should be pushing hard on health care in the next debate. ♦

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***Matthew Continetti** confirms your suspicions about Obamanomics: You, your children, and your children's children will be stuck paying the bill.*

Hello and welcome to Advanced Obamanomics at WEEKLY STANDARD U. If you are in this class, you have passed Remedial Rubinomics, Identity and Globalization in the Works of Barack Obama, and Introduction to Contemporary Religion with Professor Jeremiah Wright. Also, your check has cleared. Congratulations.

As noted in the syllabus, the required reading for today's class includes *The Audacity of Hope* pp. 220-257; Obama's March 27, 2008, speech in New York City on "Renewing the American Economy"; Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein's *Nudge*; David Leonhardt's indispensable August 24, 2008, *New York Times* magazine article "Obamanomics," from which the title of this class is drawn; and Robert Kuttner's *Obama's Challenge*.

Now, most of your classmates probably spent last night experimenting with the booze luge they had constructed out of plywood and a bag of crushed ice. You, however, made it through the required reading without—and this is no small feat—falling asleep. This means that there is a bright future in store for you at either the Bureau of Labor Statistics or the Congressional Budget Office. Good thing you didn't miss this incredible opportunity by going to last night's underwear party, getting wasted, and setting a couch on fire.

Since this is a conservative institution with the highest academic standards, each class will begin with a quiz. Who said the following?

Number One: "I accuse the present administration of being the greatest spending administration in peace times in all our history. . . . I regard reduction in federal spending as one of the most important issues of this campaign."

Number Two: "The market is the best mechanism ever invented for efficiently allocating resources to maximize production. . . . And I also think that there is a connection between the freedom of the marketplace and freedom more generally."

Correct! Speaker number one is then-presidential candidate Franklin Delano Roosevelt, campaigning in 1932. And speaker number two is presidential candidate Barack Obama, campaigning in 2008. It's often forgotten, today, how FDR campaigned for the presidency as a budget balancer who was going to rein in federal spending. And while Obama may be a liberal who spent his youth as a leftwinger, he has plenty of nice things to say about the free market. He is not going to collectivize agriculture or nationalize the banks. The Bush administration has already done that anyway.

The larger point of this quiz is to illustrate just how unpredictable politics is. As Professor Barnes likes to say, the future is never a straight-line projection of the present. This is true in life, culture, economics, and politics. A corollary is that presidents almost never govern in the manner in which they campaigned. Stuff happens. Woodrow Wilson ran for reelection on a peace platform. FDR ran as a fiscal conservative. George H.W. Bush promised he wouldn't raise taxes. George W. Bush said the United States ought not to "nation build." In each case, events interfered.

So, as we examine Obama's economic policy proposals, we ought to look at them with a skeptical eye. Many of the proposals won't become law. Others will be modified beyond recognition. Still others will be cast aside, as unforeseen developments force the rejection of old ideas and the adoption of new ones. The economy could worsen. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could worsen. The United States could become involved in new conflicts in Darfur, Iran, Pakistan, the Korean peninsula, Taiwan, or someplace no one has ever heard of. Al Qaeda could strike again. And don't forget Putin.

There are, however, a few basics we can take for granted. If Obama is elected president in a few weeks, not only is enrollment in this class going to spike, but federal taxes, spending, and the deficit—at least in the short term—are all going to rise. As taxes on the rich go up, the income threshold at which one becomes "rich" is likely to go down. Obama wants billions in new spending, and, if the Bush presidency is any indication, he won't stop Democrats in Congress from spending even more. And the new spending, combined with the loss in revenue from an economy in recession, will increase the deficit.

The outcome of many policies will be unrelated to their author's purpose. Sometimes those outcomes will be perverse. They'll exacerbate the problem. And the whole

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darned thing will be extremely difficult to roll back. As a wise man once said, the closest thing to immortality in this life is a government program.

It's possible to divide Obama's economic agenda into three parts: the Not-So-Bad, the Bad, and the Really, Really Bad. Let's take a brief look at each.

THE NOT-SO-BAD

Obama is a cool character. It's rare that you see him ruffled in public. He claims he's a "pragmatist," but he's actually a gradualist. He likes taking things step by step. He doesn't go for one-size-fits-all solutions. He's cautious, calm, and even mellow. This has sometimes been a liability, since his supporters are constantly urging him to ramp up the attacks on Bush and McCain. But other times his steadiness works well. For example, his tempered response to the current economic crisis has been rewarded in recent public opinion polls.

If he becomes president, Obama's temperament will be a plus. The markets need to see confidence in the political leadership. They react sourly to brashness and unpredictability. Obama's gradualism, moreover, could serve as a check on a liberal Democratic Congress. His health care plan, for instance, does not contain an individual mandate. His cap-and-trade proposal includes a private auction for carbon permits in order to avoid rent-seeking and corruption. He wants to make 401(k) savings programs mandatory and automatic. He could urge the Democrats who run the legislative branch to pare down their grand designs and outrageous expenditures. He might even veto a spending bill or two, although that's probably asking too much.

Obama's economic advisers aren't so bad either. His team might not include any supply-siders, but it does contain, almost exclusively, centrist Democrats who are sympathetic to markets. Obama's chief economic adviser, Jason Furman, is a protégé of Robert Rubin, who has said, in the past, and this is not a joke, kind things about Wal-Mart. Another adviser, University of Chicago economist Austan Goolsbee, got into some trouble earlier this year when, it was reported, he told a group of Canadians that Obama didn't really mean all the nasty things he was saying about NAFTA. One hopes Goolsbee was right.

Other Obama advisers include the aforementioned Rubin; former Fed chairman Paul Volcker, who, alongside Ronald Reagan, helped crush inflation in the early 80s; former Clintonite Laura Tyson; and of course mega-investor Warren Buffett. These are not revolutionaries. They have no history of pushing the envelope. Buffett couldn't be exciting if he tried. They are likely to suggest that Obama adopt, by and large, the economic policies of the Clinton years, with perhaps a little less focus on deficit reduction. And the economy, you may recall, wasn't exactly Clinton's weak spot.

The Democratic party's left wing didn't like it when Obama named Furman to his team last June. It thought Furman too centrist. And this is another not-so-bad part of Obama's economic agenda, namely, the left isn't thrilled. There are plenty of economists and journalists who argue Obama isn't left-wing enough. Robert Kuttner worries Obama will turn his back on "transformative" politics in favor of Clinton's balanced-budget economic stewardship. He'd rather have Obama transform America into Denmark. John Cassidy wrote that—and he did not mean this as a compliment—Obama "appears to be unduly influenced by the need to preserve choice." And during the Democratic primaries, Paul Krugman was a fierce critic of Obama's health care plan. As long as parts of the left are angry at Obama, he can't be all that bad. Which brings us to:

THE BAD

There are all sorts of taxes that can be raised, and a President Obama is going to raise almost all of them. He's going to raise federal income taxes on families making more than $250,000 a year. He's going to raise capital gains and dividend taxes. He's going to raise the corporate and estate taxes. He's proposing a windfall profits tax on oil companies. He'd like to tax "carried interest" as private income. He's suggested lifting the cap on income subject to the payroll tax.

Obama says that, under his plan, tax rates on incomes below $250,000 will not change, and that "95 percent" of Americans will actually get an income tax *cut*. But this is misleading. Plenty of Americans pay very little, or absolutely no, federal income tax. So it's hard to give them a tax "cut." What Obama is actually proposing is a refundable tax credit—it's unclear whether it's a one-shot deal or permanent—of $500 per person. The credit will be, in David Leonhardt's words, "applied toward income taxes based on payroll taxes paid." Meaning that everyone who pays payroll taxes will get $500. If your federal income tax burden is less than $500, you'll get the balance via government check. This is not the only tax credit Obama would make fully refundable. He would apply a similar logic to education, mortgage interest, savings, child care, and hybrid car credits.

It's true Obama would eliminate capital gains taxes for "start-ups and small businesses," although he hasn't said how he'll distinguish between actual start-ups, and companies—General Motors, say—that will call themselves start-ups for tax purposes. It's true that, under Obama's plan, seniors who make less than $50,000 a year won't pay any income taxes at all. But it's still not quite accurate to

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call Obama a tax cutter. Obama is more of a tax carver. He wants to take the federal tax code and carve out all these credits and exemptions so that the overall tax burden becomes slightly more progressive, and more government benefits flow to the middle class and poor. That means an already complicated tax code is about to become even more complicated. And that income tax hikes on the wealthy are going to finance benefits for some people who don't pay any income tax at all. This isn't "cutting" taxes, by which one usually means across-the-board, permanent rate cuts. It's another form of spending.

A conservative economist would tell Obama, politely, that effective tax reform is flattening the tax rates while broadening the tax base. And Obama would tell him, politely, to go jump in a lake.

THE REALLY, REALLY BAD

Still, it's unlikely Obama will raise tax rates to the point where they distort incentives to work, invest, and produce, as they did during the 1930s and the 1970s. It's axiomatic, however, that when you tax something you get less of it; Obama's higher taxes will therefore result in less investment and risktaking on the part of the wealthy, whose capital finances new companies that create jobs. This is the wrong thing to do during a recession, but Obama and the Democrats in Congress will do it anyway, which probably means that the economic downturn will last longer than it ought to. Such is life. It's not the end of the world.

But the end of the economic world as we know it—this only a slight exaggeration—is exactly what might happen if Obama follows through on two other aspects of his economic agenda.

The first is his opposition to free trade. Obama has opposed every trade deal under consideration since he's been in Congress, which, admittedly, isn't all that long. During the Democratic primaries he called for renegotiating NAFTA. He may praise free trade in interviews with the financial press, but he clams up when faced with a large crowd. And unlike Bill Clinton, Obama has nary a positive word for free trade in general, even though it has produced undeniable benefits for Americans and people worldwide. Obama attacks "companies that ship jobs overseas," but he doesn't have much else to say about the global economy. Democratic economists will tell you Obama knows better and is just saying what's politically expedient. Talk about a profile in courage.

The problem is the economists could be wrong—this happens on occasion—and Obama could actually mean what he says. We'd have an anti-free trader in the White House for the first time in decades. And this would be an absolute disaster. The global trading system has already reached an impasse, with rich countries unwilling to end agricultural subsidies and level the playing field for farmers in poor countries. A no-trade Obama presidency could let the system degrade even further. And if he were to implement anti-trade policies—tariffs and other protectionist measures—the result could be a trade war that would raise prices, kill jobs, and increase enmity between nations. For the sake of the U.S. and global economy, Obama can't allow the AFL-CIO and other unions to dictate trade policy.

But they just might, because Obama has shown no sign of breaking with the unions on any issue. This is the second-most disturbing aspect of his economic agenda. Obama has said he would sign the so-called "card-check" legislation that Congress will undoubtedly consider, and probably pass, next year. The legislation would eliminate the secret ballot in union elections and allow the bosses to unionize a shop once a certain number of names had been written down on a card. Card-check is an ugly piece of work. One can see how the opportunities for graft, fraud, and intimidation under this sort of scheme would be enormous. And the democratic ideal of the secret ballot would be undermined.

Card-check would also lead to a rapid jump in unionization. This is not, despite what your Teamster friends might tell you, a good thing. Union participation in the private sector has been on the decline for decades and, not coincidentally, during this same amount of time, on average, productivity has skyrocketed while unemployment has plummeted. Unions produce frozen labor markets, which increase unemployment and class stratification while lowering productivity and economic growth. And the unions' politically negotiated wage gains also encourage inflation.

When did the world understand Ronald Reagan was serious about ending stagflation? When he fired the air traffic controllers and broke their strike. A President Obama could demonstrate similar independence and fortitude by vetoing card-check. But don't bet on it. It's more likely he'll cave, and the economy and labor-force democracy will suffer the consequences.

For those of your who arrived late to class—don't think I didn't notice—here's the CliffsNotes version of today's lecture: Obamanomics equals higher taxes, more government spending, a larger deficit, a more complicated tax code, increased regulation, a slowdown in global economic integration, and the resurrection of the labor unions, all brought to you by a cool-headed gradualist with a team of brilliant advisers. Not a pretty picture. But, as the saying goes, conservatives should always prepare for the worst, because they ought to expect nothing less.

Class dismissed. ♦

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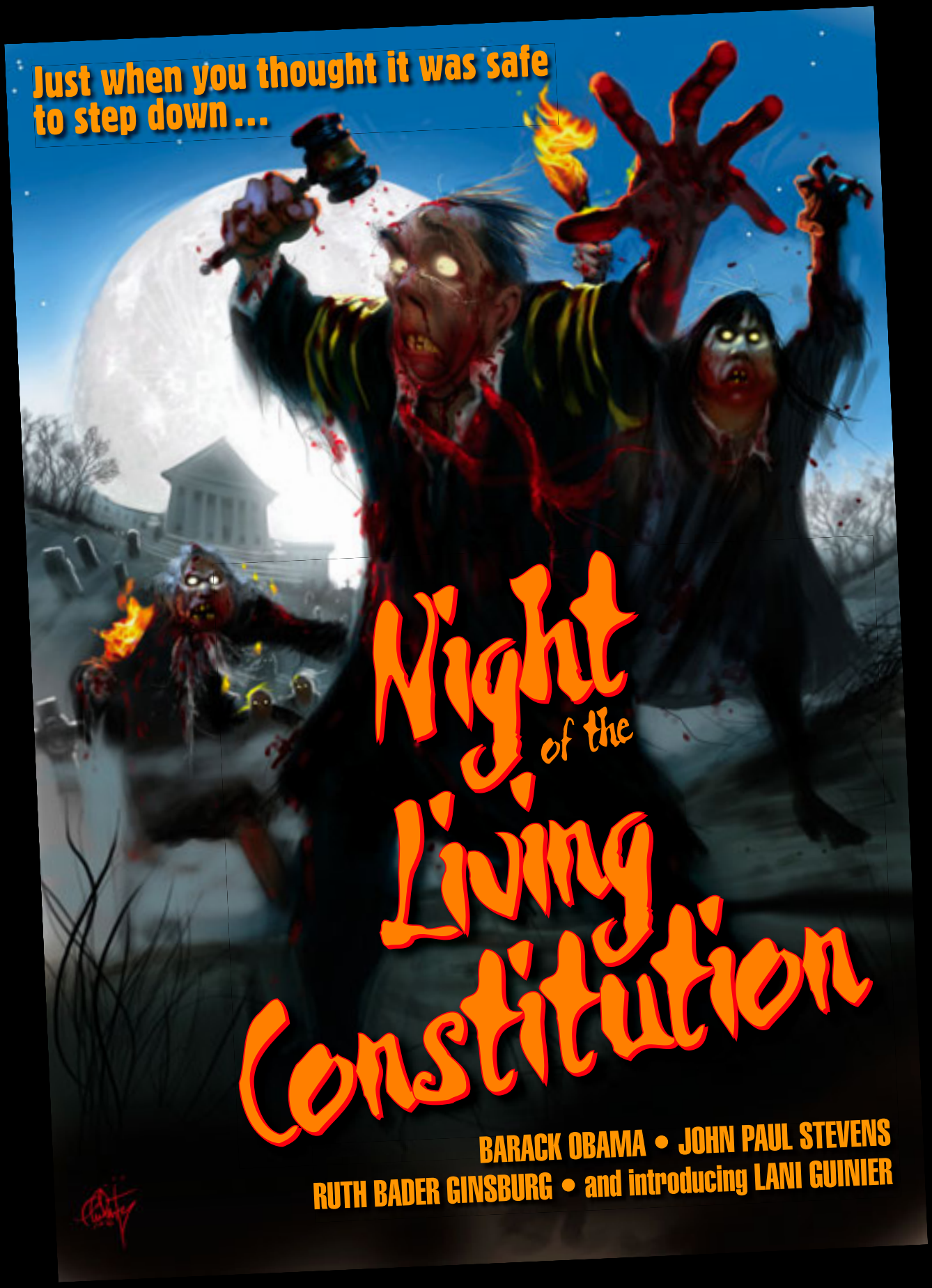

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Terry Eastland *explains the judicial consequences of an Obama presidency*

Have you noticed how the justices of the Supreme Court are living longer and longer, compiling more and more years of service—far more than they used to? Doubtless the justices tire of seeing their ages mentioned in stories triggered by the presidential race that contemplate who is most likely to retire and leave a vacancy to be filled. But here is what the birth certificates say:

John Paul Stevens, 88
Ruth Bader Ginsburg, 75
Antonin Scalia, 72
Anthony Kennedy, 72
Stephen Breyer, 70
David Souter, 69
Clarence Thomas, 60
Samuel Alito, 58
John Roberts (the chief justice), 53.

Stevens has served the longest of the nine, and by next July he will have completed 34 years, than which only five justices ever recorded more. (He is threatening the record in this obscure competition, which was set by the justice whose seat he took in 1975, William O. Douglas, who served more than 36 years.) Because of his age and length of service, Stevens is widely considered the most likely to step down, followed by Ginsburg. Both happen to be judicial liberals on a Court that has four liberals (Breyer and Souter being the other two) and four judicial conservatives (Scalia, Thomas, Alito, and Roberts). The fickle Kennedy tends to provide the fifth vote in close cases, particularly those involving abortion, race, and religion.

Now, John McCain promises to name judicial conservatives to the Court, while Barack Obama vows to pick judicial liberals. So you can see what could happen if McCain is elected president. For if there is a vacancy during his term, the departing justice is likely to be a judicial liberal. The same is true if there is a second vacancy. One can imagine a President McCain replacing liberals with conservatives and thus finally meeting that ancient Republican goal (dating from the 1968 presidential campaign) of an unambiguously conservative majority on the Court. In this liberal nightmare, the relatively youthful majority would be busy whittling away at *Roe* v. *Wade*, eliminating race-based preferences in the public sector, strengthening the government's hand in fighting terrorism, and facilitating a larger role for religion in public life—among many other bad, bad things.

But, for McCain, actually replacing liberals with conservatives would be far more easily said than done. Indeed, liberals who worry that a conservative majority could be created by the addition of a single McCain appointee also know that, regardless of who is elected president, a Democratic Senate will almost surely persist through the first two years of the next presidential term—and probably all four. With comfortable majorities, Senate Democrats will have the power to prevent the appointment of any nominee.

As for Obama, if he is elected president and Stevens or Ginsburg (or both) step down during his term of office, then he gets to replace a liberal with a liberal—maintenance work, you could call it, though the liberal cohort would become younger. Obama couldn't create a liberal majority unless at least one conservative, or man-in-the-middle Kennedy, were to step down, and that looks doubtful, at least in the next four years. Neither Kennedy nor Scalia shows signs of leaving the Court, and the three remaining conservatives are young, as young is measured on the Court—two of them have sat only briefly.

Still, if a conservative were to retire, President Obama would find himself in a winning situation as regards confirmation of his nominee. Indeed, it's hard to imagine a Democratic Senate rejecting any Obama nominee for any vacancy, at least not on grounds of judicial philosophy.

Which raises the question of Obama's judicial philosophy. We know what McCain's is. He is the nominee of a party that for decades has advocated interpreting the law on its own terms and not infusing it with ideas or values not found within the Constitution—a party that opposes government by judiciary and supports judicial restraint. The non-lawyer McCain reflects this philosophy in typically direct statements, such as this from a speech on the courts last spring at Wake Forest University: "A court is hardly competent to check the abuses of other branches of government when it cannot even control itself."

There can be little doubt that McCain accepts and will act in furtherance of his party's philosophy. He voted for the Roberts and Alito nominations, both of which Obama opposed, and he holds up both as models for the kind of judges he would appoint.

In sharp contrast to McCain, Obama is the nominee of a party that has embraced the activism of the Warren Court and its expansion under the Burger Court (think *Roe* v. *Wade*) and which has hardened in its hostility to judicial conserva-

THOMAS FLUHARTY

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tism during the Bush presidency. Obama has proved to be one of his party's most determined opponents of judicially conservative nominees. He voted not only against Roberts and Alito but also against six circuit-court nominees and joined in the Democrats' filibustering of such nominees—which filibustering was without precedent in Senate history.

Obama, a Harvard-trained lawyer who for a decade taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School, has said "my judges" should have "the heart, the empathy, to recognize what it's like to be a young teenage mom, the empathy to understand what it's like to be poor or African-American or gay or disabled or old." He has characterized such people as being in "the minority" and "on the outside" and not having "a lot of clout." His judges should help them by importing to their deliberations their own "perspectives," "ethics," and "moral bearings." Thus his judges would carry out the judiciary's "historic role" of protecting those who "may be vulnerable in the political process," who have seen "the system not work for them," who don't "have access to political power," and who "can't protect themselves from being dealt with sometimes unfairly."

What's striking about comments like these is that Obama seems to be espousing a sort of "Footnote Four" judicial philosophy. Footnote Four is the most famous footnote in constitutional law. It's found in *United States* v. *Carolene Products*, the 1938 case in which the New Deal Court sustained a law prohibiting the shipment of so-called "filled milk" across state lines. (It is remembered today solely because of its renowned footnote.) Marking a turning point in constitutional law, Footnote Four confirmed the court's new-found deference to economic regulation while announcing the judicial intention, as Lucas A. Powe Jr. puts it in his history of the Warren Court, to protect "those who need protection." The footnote called them "discrete and insular minorities"—those Americans, says Powe, who "even in a well-functioning political process may not be able to form coalitions and thus may be subject to discriminatory legislation."

For Obama, it would seem that what he calls minorities or outsiders would encompass not only those "vulnerable" in the political process and thus "subject to discriminatory legislation" in a Footnote Four sense but also those who encounter a "system" that doesn't work for them. It appears for Obama that the courts must be involved in improving things for all of those "who need protection," and it could be a large group considering that Obama's informal, campaign-trail list hardly seems exhaustive.

Obama, who is a stout defender of the right to abortion announced in *Roe*, would seem to want judges sympathetic to arguments that the Constitution protects a fundamental right to education or health care or housing—perhaps even a right to credit. Though Obama has supported the death penalty in certain, narrowly defined circumstances, his philosophy would also seem to entail its judicial abolition. And with regard to race-based preferences, judges who share his philosophy could push for their permanent institution in higher education, employment, and contracting as a way of making the "system" work better for certain minorities.

An Obama judiciary would be a plainly liberal one. Not surprisingly, Obama has endorsed the idea of a "living Constitution," one judges adapt to meet the needs of a changing society. A living Constitution has its analogue in what might be called a "living U.S. Code," by which judges rewrite federal statutes they regard as somehow deficient, which for Obama could mean statutes having an adverse impact on people "who need protection." Obama's model justice is Earl Warren, who saw the role of the Court as that of doing justice, regardless of what the law at issue in a case might say. The senator must have cringed when he heard John Roberts, during his confirmation hearing to be chief justice, answer a question about what the biggest threats to the rule of law might be by saying there was really only one threat—that of judges who take their "authority and extend it into areas where they're going beyond the interpretation of the Constitution, where they're making the law. . . . Judges have to recognize that their role is a limited one. That is the basis of their legitimacy."

This election plainly poses the question, if voters realize it or not, of whether we want judges like Roberts or judges eager to extend their authority beyond what is legitimate and erase the venerable distinction between law and politics. This question will be there even if no Supreme Court vacancies occur during the next four years. For the next president will certainly name judges to the federal appeals courts. At the usual turnover rate, if Obama is elected, by the end of his four-year term eight of the twelve regular circuits could have majorities appointed by Democratic presidents. By the same measure, if McCain is elected, every one of the twelve circuits, including the notoriously liberal Ninth Circuit, could have a Republican-appointed majority. The appellate courts are especially important today because, with the Supreme Court deciding many fewer cases than it used to, they effectively function as the courts of final appeal in their jurisdictions.

Just as the appeals courts could go either way, so could the Supreme Court: a President McCain could have the opportunity to create a conservative majority or a President Obama could have the chance to create a liberal majority. On the other hand, it's possible that the composition of the Court when the next election rolls around will be the same as it is today. The same justices could be sitting in their same chairs. They would be four years older, and they would have served four more years. And Justice Stevens, age 92, would hold that record. ♦

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Edmond O'Brien in '1984' (1956)

POPPERFOTO / GETTY IMAGES

She's Come Undone

From Gore guru to pretty paranoid

BY KATHERINE MANGU-WARD

Naomi Wolf, bestselling author of *The Beauty Myth*, lover of earth tones, and speaker of truth to power, was recently found crumpled on the floor in Newark airport between a T.G.I. Friday's and a World's Best Yogurt, sobbing into her cell phone. How do I know about this embarrassing episode? Private detectives? Security camera footage? Nope. Wolf tells me, and anyone else who cares to know, all about it in the first section of her new book.

"I am not ashamed of this abasement," she writes, "because I was actually heartsick."

What could possibly be so terrible that it would overcome the powerful natural instinct to minimize contact with the floor of Newark airport at all costs? Apparently, it is difficult to run for office in America.

Katherine Mangu-Ward is associate editor of Reason.

In *Give Me Liberty*, subtitled *A Handbook for American Revolutionaries*, Wolf lays out what she calls a "battle plan" for taking democracy back from the "thugs," a guide for rising up in "self-defense and legitimate rebellion." Wolf is modeling herself on the American Founders, she says; and we should, too. But the going won't be easy.

"Even with a research assistant, a graduate education, and with the privilege of this project being my only full-time job," Wolf finds a variety of the basic tasks of democratic life difficult. Things like getting a permit for a protest, finding a decent source of news, and filing the forms to run for office. (It's this last task that reduced Wolf to a quivering mess down amongst the yogurt cups.)

Give Me Liberty
A Handbook for American Revolutionaries
by Naomi Wolf
Simon & Schuster, 376 pp., $13.95

She's right, of course, that none of these are easy tasks, and there's a case to be made that, in a well-functioning republic, they should be simpler. Wolf is rightly troubled, for instance, by the Catch-527 of running for office: It's almost impossible to raise money legally for a campaign without a lawyer, and it's hard to pay a lawyer before you've raised money.

Some might blame specific campaign finance regulations, or the ongoing abysmal state of federal bureaucracy for this little trap, but Wolf sees something larger at work: "The materials seemed *designed* to make you conclude that democracy was just too complicated for ordinary people to take charge of," she writes.

Which brings us to Wolf's guiding principle for understanding American politics: Never accept an explanation of incompetence or coincidence when a conspiracy will do. In an earlier version of *Give Me Liberty*, there's a passage where Wolf discovers a government website with a "set of random dates floating mysteriously in space"—deadlines with no action steps attached for running for office in Virginia.

> The dates were random, unyielding, self-censoring—yet silently guaranteeing disharmony and ensuring that someone, somewhere, will, with the greatest hopes and best of intentions, mess up their application and have no recourse to fixing it. This was starting to feel to me like a cosmic, almost sublime, yet thoroughly straight-faced mockery of the electorate.

This particular passage has wisely been removed from the final edition, but Wolf's sense of cosmic injustice and personal affront in the face of such indigni-

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ties as malfunctioning Internet browsers remains robust. In Wolf's world, the floating dates aren't the result of bad programming or an innocent formatting error by some government minion; it's all part of a massive digital conspiracy.

"I'm so used to interacting with people who say, 'this is weird' and then describe some crazy thing with the technology," Wolf said at an underpopulated talk at a Borders in Washington on the day her book was released. Elsewhere, she relates another chilling tale of technical malfeasance: Rep. Dennis "Kucinich's website was jammed when he tried to move forward with impeachment."

Wolf associates with only the cream of the conspiracy theory crop. There's Kucinich, of course, who sponsored a bill in 2001 banning jet trails on the grounds that they could be used as exotic space weapons. Wolf also gives the last word in *Give Me Liberty* to Mark Crispin Miller, author of *Fooled Again*, a book exhaustively documenting how the last two presidential elections were rigged, and a signatory of the 9/11 Truth Statement, which demands an investigation into the U.S. government's role in the events of September 11, 2001.

Like all the best conspiracy theorists, Wolf has given up on the media establishment.

"I came to this reluctantly," she said at Borders, "because all of my friends run the mainstream media." She hasn't given up appearing on television, of course, but she has been forced to give up consuming her friends' efforts because they're simply not running the kind of amazing stories that Wolf is hearing every day from "ordinary citizens."

> I heard from a citizen—but never read in the suburban press—that people he knew had opened their luggage after a flight to find letters from the Transportation Security Administration that said that they did not "appreciate" the reading material, critical of the administration in power at that time, that these Americans had carried in their personal possessions.

Since Wolf heard this story secondhand from an unnamed "citizen," it's hard to corroborate. But there was a story in Seattle—covered by the local press and picked up by the news wires and CNN—that bears a striking similarity to Wolf's twice-told tale. The "letter" in the Seattle case was a single line scribbled in the margin of the standard TSA inspection notice. A screener had taken exception to some Iraq war protest signs in a man's luggage: "Don't appreciate your anti-American attitude!" the annotation read.

While Wolf would no doubt see a conspiracy of dissent-crushing TSA thugs taking orders from on high for the precise language of their notes, a simpler explanation might be that the TSA has attracted a freelance would-be censor, with a Sharpie in his pocket

Naomi Wolf

and no common sense, and that story migrated from the mainstream press to her ears, with slight mutations in tow.

The official response to the incident, by the way: "We do not condone our employees making any kind of political comments or personal comments to any travelers," TSA spokeswoman Heather Rosenker told Reuters. "That is not acceptable." But they would say that, wouldn't they?

Mostly, Wolf's paranoia is good fun—yuppies freaking out about letters in their luggage, and a little feminine hysteria paired with computer illiteracy—but sometimes she meddles in more serious matters.

"Seven soldiers wrote op-eds in the *New York Times* critical of the war, three are dead, one shot in the head," she writes, implying the worst. A quick Google search reveals that two of the dead soldiers, colleagues and coauthors, died in the same accident—an overturned cargo truck. The soldier shot in the head was another coauthor, hit while on a combat mission when the article was still being composed. He survived, mercifully, yet tells no tales of a conspiracy to murder his comrades in dissent.

Wolf's use of their stories, and the stories of dissidents living under truly oppressive regimes, to make her loopy case for creeping fascism in America is a little tougher to take.

Finally, there's Wolf's personal persecution, related between cheers at a recent rally in Washington. Wolf is no stranger to odd alliances; after the publication of *The Beauty Myth* in 1990, for instance, she made common cause against pornography with social conservatives at the height of the culture wars. But strange indeed is the path that takes Naomi Wolf to Rep. Ron Paul's door.

At a Ron Paul Revolution March this past July, Wolf told the crowd—composed mostly of people waving banners with legends like "Read *Atlas Shrugged*" and "Mises Saves"—this story: "My daughter is 13 years old. She's in summer camp right now. She's writing me letters. *I'm not getting her letters*. I'm not getting half of my mail. And when my mail arrives, it's ripped wide open. I showed it to the Post Office and they said 'That's not possible.'"

When she retold the story at Borders last month, she mentioned that birthday party invitations for her daughter were now also being intercepted.

Explanation Number One: Thirteen-year-old girls are terrible correspondents and worse friends, and Wolf's daughter will be spending the next few months silently mortified that her white lies about letter writing and her social ostracism have taken the national stage as part of her mother's conspiracy theories. Explanation Number Two: The American secret police believe that vital information is contained in correspondence *from* teenage girls, and have confiscated all letters written in pink ink.

DAVID SHANKBONE

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Your call.

While the enemies of freedom are almost unbelievably sly and ruthless in Wolf's universe, the ordinary citizen is also an intellectual and organizational powerhouse, waiting to be unleashed. One can't deny that there's a certain kind of egalitarianism here, twisted though it may be.

"Are ordinary people smart enough to run America? The data is in. The answer is yes." The American people are currently apathetic and disengaged, Wolf says, because they "intuit" a maze around them "and do not want to spend their lives walking around with fake shiny keys fumbling with doors that will never open."

Hence one of the nuttier ideas Wolf endorses in *Give Me Liberty*, one that has nothing to do with conspiracies. Wolf is enthused about the idea of a National Issues Day, a day (or perhaps two) where many things would be debated nationwide but nothing decided. This would "mean substance, not trivia," she writes, "since local people are unlikely to put up with one another wasting time on boxers versus briefs."

Elsewhere in the book she finds evidence for her belief in the wonder-working power of ordinary citizen engagement when she meets and talks to a "real live pro-lifer" for the first time in her long career: "I had never entertained the remotest notion that a pro-life activist might have come to her or his position through motives recognizable to me—through sincere concern for poor women, or women's well-being, or for the sincere well-being of children as a whole," she writes.

Life outside of cable news, Wolf's previous natural habitat, is indeed a marginally better place. But boxers versus briefs? That's never going to go away.

In 2006, Wolf was in therapy for writers block. During one session she says she inhabited the persona of a 13-year-old boy and saw Jesus. "I absolutely believe in divine providence now, absolutely believe God totally cares about every single one of us intimately," she told Glasgow's *Sunday Herald*. These days, Wolf can't seem to stop writing. Her previous book, *The End of America*, which chronicles the "fascist shift" we are now experiencing in the United States, came out barely a year ago. It looks as if her faith has been rewarded.

Wolf has always sensed powerful unseen forces pressing in on her—the male gaze; the patriarchy; the state; in one memorable instance, the groping hands of Yale *éminence grise* Harold Bloom; and now Jesus. The democracy thieves (whoever they are) join this cast in a book much like her previous efforts: confusingly argued, historically illiterate, and yet strangely mesmerizing.

"The web sites that are supposed to teach citizens how to participate, how to lead, are in Latin, you know?" she said at Borders. "And I, like, speak the vernacular." And on the written page she does—fluently.

After reading her colorful, rambling, paranoid account of her wrestling match with modern American democracy, the optimist in me can't help but wonder: If Naomi Wolf finds it almost impossible to successfully stage a rally or run for office, perhaps the system is working pretty well after all. ♦

Game Over

The rise and fall of televised cribbage.

BY JOE QUEENAN

Nothing in entertainment history is more shocking than the overnight collapse of the televised cribbage craze.

Prime-time cribbage came and went faster than *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?* and for the same reason: greed, overexposure, copycat programming, the television industry's constitutional inability to nurture a newborn. There is a lesson to be learned here. If you're going to kill the golden goose, at least wait until it's stopped being a gosling.

Until Al Gore mentioned it on a late-night public television program several months ago, cribbage was almost unknown in this country, its enthusiasts limited to a few aging sailors and a handful of wan, pasty-faced anglophiles. Played with a board that contains two sets of 120 holes, cribbage players score by combining cards to total 15 or 31 points, or by pairing several identical cards, or by arranging runs of consecutive cards.

Easy to learn, with an official lingo limited to a few catch phrases like "Morgan's Orchard" (two pairs) and "Two for his nibs" (two points are awarded when the jack turns up after the cards are cut), cribbage has long been a staple of British pub life, where teams compete on a weekly basis for local supremacy. But even in Britain, its popularity has been dwindling for years as it is now mostly associated with an aging, genteel, generally rustic demographic group, not with the young, edgy, hard-drinking urbanites advertisers crave.

Given these particulars, no one could have foreseen the cribbage tsunami that swept the nation this past year. But thanks to the desperation wrought by the writers' strike, networks were prepared to try just about any programming as long as it was inexpensive and novel. That was certainly an accurate description of the reality show *Castaway Cribbage*, which debuted in January. *Castaway Cribbage* featured 13 *Gilligan's Island* impersonators trapped in Shamokin,

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Pa., for three months with nothing to do but play a card game that none of them liked or understood. Each week, the lowest scorer got booted off the show. The losers won SUVs and condos; the winner took home $10 million. The kicker was that none of the contestants had ever played cards before as they were all practicing Methodists.

"We originally thought about *mah jong* or *Go* or *belotte* or something Third Worldian," explains Chantal McElroy, who came up with the idea for the show. "But those games were too hard to follow on television. Even on a 52-inch flat screen, *mah jong* is boring. The only thing worse is ice hockey."

"We knew that people would accuse us of trying to cash in on the poker craze," concedes executive director/stunt coordinator Wayne Ferris. "In fact, we were leery of cards to begin with, because *Redneck Canasta* had gone down in flames on A&E and *Old Maids in the 'Hood* had crashed and burned over on BET. But we thought that because of the cute little pegs and the funny scoreboard, cribbage just might touch a nerve."

"People who think we phoned this in have no idea how hard it is to find eight Methodist *Gilligan's Island* impersonators," adds McElroy. "We were *this close* to bagging the cards idea and going with *Big House Quoits*."

If the network was seeking to touch a nerve, a nerve it touched: The staggering popularity of *Castaway Cribbage* led to not one but two prime-time ESPN programs devoted to the heretofore arcane card game: *Cotswold Smack-Down Hold 'Em* and *Cribbage: Rawer Than Raw*. This was followed by the blockbuster film *Deck Shoes* about a mild-mannered math teacher from Bury St. Edmund's (Antonio Banderas) who saves a group of inner-city ballerinas from drugs by teaching them the venerable-if-somewhat-prissy limey pastime. By March, cribbage was the second-most-viewed sport on television, right behind professional football and X-treme snowboarding.

Add to that a trio of reality shows—*El Sabado del Cribbage*, *Queer Jack for the Straight Queen*, and *No Crib, No Cribbage*—not to mention a line of cribbage apparel designed by Tommy Hilfiger, and it's not hard to see why cribbage made the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Forbes*, and *Vibe* the very same week. And with online cribbage projected to rake in $183.8 billion in annual wagers, cribbage seemed poised to depose the online poker industry that had dominated the Net since Spring 2006.

How, then, did a sport that seized the nation by the throat in January completely fade from view in a matter of months? Clearly, its association with Al Gore helped and hurt. In 2007, while developing a line of eco-friendly children's products under the rubric *Green Games for a Grey Planet*, Gore got his hands on scientific data indicating that cribbage playing left the smallest carbon footprint on the planet of any pastime known to man, including checkers, Parcheesi, Fish, Ultimate Stratego, and Clue.

"You just don't move around a whole lot when you're playing cribbage," Gore told Charlie Rose. "You don't eat, you don't talk, you don't sweat, you hardly need to breathe. It's a little bit like being John Kerry. If everybody on this planet would take up cribbage and stop driving their Hummers to tailgate parties, or playing World of Warcraft 24 hours a day, we could reduce carbon emissions 90 percent by the year 2010. If we could get the Chinese to play cribbage, we'd reduce emissions by half that amount by Flag Day. Cribbage may be the most powerful new idea since metrosexuality."

It soon turned out that Gore's data were all wrong: Because most cribbage boards are made of wood, the popularity of the game was causing devastating deforestation of the Amazon, inflicting even worse damage on the ozone layer. This grim news hit the papers the same day *Celebrity Cribbage* was slated to air, and just as the public was starting to tire of the craze. Today, televised poker is alive and well, while cribbage mania is scarcely a memory.

"Cribbage went the way of the *meringue*, communism, the pet rock, *Wig Wag* magazine, Judge Reinhold and Bill Richardson," laments Ferris. "I think the real killer was when Madonna started playing cribbage with Sting and Paris Hilton and Britney Spears and Lindsey Lohan after her kabbala classes. The public liked it when cribbage players were fat slobs from the Post Office with stupid hats and starter goatees and aviator glasses and nicknames like Odin, Bringer of Suburban Darkness.

"Once Brad and Angelina got interested, cribbage was doomed." ♦

BERT HARDY / PICTURE POST / GETTY IMAGES

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Red Aussie

He adored Stalin, and the usual suspects adored him.

BY PAUL HOLLANDER

Neither the subject nor the author of this book is likely to be familiar to many American readers, but there are good reasons to learn about both. Tibor Méray is a Hungarian writer and journalist who escaped from Hungary after the 1956 revolution and lives in France. Wilfred Burchett (1911-1983) was an Australian journalist who spent much of his life living in and reporting from various Communist countries he championed and served with unflagging zeal.

On Burchett
by Tibor Méray
Callistemon, 270 pp., $26

Méray and Burchett met and became friends during the Korean war they were covering from the North Korean side, both geographically and ideologically. Méray, a committed Communist at the time, was correspondent for the Hungarian Communist party's daily newspaper; Burchett was reporting for non-Communist papers in the West. He was a member of the Australian Communist party, as he disclosed to Méray on the day they met, but otherwise firmly denied this throughout his life. The denial lent greater credibility to his pro-Communist views, coming from an allegedly "independent" or "maverick" Western journalist.

Views of Wilfred Burchett have been extremely polarized. Many believed, especially in Australia, that he was a KGB agent and traitor. After he lost his passport in 1955 the Australian government refused to replace it, but no legal proceedings were ever initiated against him. He subsequently traveled on a North Vietnamese travel document and, later on, a Cuban passport he was given in 1967, courtesy of Fidel Castro. He regained his Australian passport in 1972. His critics, such as an Australian army officer who spent a year in Chinese captivity, saw him, not without reason, as "a man who threw in his lot with the Chinese Communist forces . . . [and] an important figure in obtaining the so-called confessions of U.S. flyers as evidence on which the 'germ warfare' allegations were based."

In *Burchett Reporting the Other Side of the World 1939-1983*, published in Australia in 1986, he was characterized as a "heroic" journalist with "an uncommon moral passion." One of the contributors, Gavan McCormack, saw him as the Australian Dreyfus. His Western supporters and sympathizers included Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Bertrand Russell, Linus Pauling, Melina Mercouri, Norman Mailer, Arthur Miller, Harrison Salisbury, and Ben Kiernan; less surprisingly, Noam Chomsky, David Dellinger, Corliss Lamont, and William Kunstler were admirers as well. A *New York Times* reviewer once regarded him as "a man of uncommon honesty" who "responded with an almost childlike directness whenever he saw something that smacked of injustice." But Burchett rarely noted or commented upon injustices in Communist societies—except when Communist authorities themselves granted posthumous compassion to their victims.

The excellent reputation he enjoyed among Western intellectuals is among the many illustrations of the gullibility, double standards, and ignorance that used to prevail in these circles. His was a case of mistaken identity, as he reminded (for example) Harrison Salisbury, who wrote a fawning introduction for his *At the Barricades*: "Of the old fashioned pre-1917 radicals . . . a Lincoln Steffens with an Australian accent."

The personality and life of Wilfred Burchett prompts some renewed reflection on the connections between the personal and political realms. Burchett's public behavior has demonstrated how profoundly political beliefs and commitments can disfigure and deform a human being when his idealism becomes subordinated to unscrupulous political forces. His actions and attitudes also suggest the possibility of a selective affinity between mendacious, deceptive human beings and political systems of a similar character. These individuals, like the political systems and movements they are attracted to, are initially motivated by lofty goals but end up using (or sanctioning) sordid means at odds with glorious ends.

Much of *On Burchett* is devoted to a meticulous and painstaking documentation of the astonishing number of misrepresentations and plain lies Burchett concocted and peddled over his long journalistic career—and Méray was in a good position to expose. Méray decided to write, in part, to clear the name of his old friend Miklós Gimes, who was executed in 1958 for his participation in the 1956 Hungarian revolution and the subject of scurrilous fabrications and characterizations in one of Burchett's books.

Méray also takes the opportunity to review and refute other falsehoods and misrepresentations Burchett perpetrated, most notoriously about the post-World War II show trials in Eastern Europe and the myth of the American use of "germ warfare" in Korea. Of the László Rajk trial in Hungary, for example, Burchett wrote that "one may be sure that the police had a watertight case against them, a case which no amount of denying could disapprove." He also presented with unflinching self-assurance the official versions of the show trials of Cardinal Mindszenty in Hungary and Traicho Kostov in Bulgaria.

Paul Hollander is the author of the forthcoming The Only Super Power: Reflections on Strength, Weakness and Anti-Americanism.

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When, in the wake of the post-Stalin revelations, Burchett discussed these trials with Méray during a 1956 visit to Budapest. He said:

> "It is terrifying that all this could happen in a socialist system." Then, after a little pause, he added: "But one thing should not be forgotten: the main enemy is American imperialism."

It was a perfect summary of Burchett's worldview: Whatever a Communist (or in his words, socialist) system did wrong was morally neutralized and sanitized by the greater axiomatic evil of its archenemy, American imperialism. By the time Burchett admitted that these were show trials, that was the official line. As Méray observes, "Burchett simply and humbly followed the altered line. . . . [E]very time he gave up following a line . . . he immediately took up a new line also to be followed with blind loyalty."

Contrary to the assertion of admirers such as the Australian journalist John Pilger—currently enamored of Hugo Chávez—Burchett never admitted error, or had second thoughts. Thirty years after the show trials he contrived to accept a bizarre theory of a conspiracy between Lavrenty Beria of the KGB and Allen Dulles of the CIA, designed to discredit László Rajk and other Tito-style (or national) Communists in Eastern Europe.

About the POW camps in North Korea, for example, Burchett wrote:

> I visited every camp in which United Nations prisoners were held. One can only describe the atmosphere as that of a holiday resort. . . . The camp resembled nothing but a summer camp of youth. . . . Food conditions were excellent.

Elsewhere he compared one of these camps to "a holiday resort in Switzerland," and in a 1962 book he praised "the humanism of Soviet prisons." Burchett was equally unstinting in his praise of Mao Zedong and the Cultural Revolution in China, Ho Chi Minh of North Vietnam, and even Andrei Vishinsky, the prosecutor in the Moscow show trials of the 1930s. He considered Cambodia's Pol Pot a "progressive intellectual."

Notwithstanding his easy access to Communist authorities, and his privileged treatment, his eight years spent in the Soviet Union, and his helping the Chinese to interrogate American prisoners and screen Western journalists in Korea, Méray does not think that Burchett was a KGB agent.

"To work as an informer and go-between," he writes, "Burchett did not necessarily have to be on the payroll of the KGB. It is unlikely that he received separate payments for these activities, which were more probably part of a 'package deal.' His remunerations took the form of various privileges" such as excellent housing in Moscow.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of his character was the seamless unity of deeply held beliefs and a cynical manipulativeness. Burchett was, without doubt, a "true believer" with the inflated self-conception of being an important actor in history, combining cheery self-presentation, unhesitating mendaciousness, and the kind of ruthless idealism that enabled him to overlook the fate of the victims of the cause that was central to his life. ♦

Safety First

What it means when the Germans reward 'peace.'

BY SUSANNE KLINGENSTEIN

On October 19, at the Frankfurt Book Fair, the German-born painter Anselm Kiefer will receive the Peace Prize of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association, Germany's most important award for cultural achievement.

Kiefer seems an odd choice, not because his achievements may be in doubt, but because he is a painter. Until now the *Friedenspreis* (as the award is called in German) has always gone to a book person: Susan Sontag and Chinua Achebe, Jürgen Habermas and Karl Jaspers, Amos Oz and Jorge Semprún received the award. Or it has gone to someone who uses language effectively to convey ideas and ethical principles, such as Václav Havel or Theodor Heuss. Or it has gone to Jews, among them Yehudi Menuhin and Teddy Kollek, in which case their deeds spoke for them, especially the deed of coming to Germany.

Kiefer is neither Jewish, nor does he use language to impress the public with his ethical point of view. The trustees of the Booksellers Association got around that tricky issue by arguing that Kiefer's "pictorial language" (*Bildsprache*) transforms "viewers into readers." Moreover, their argument goes, Kiefer not only responds in his works to literature and poetry, but also turns the book—that is, "the form of the book"—into a "decisive vehicle of expression" (*entscheidenden Ausdrucks träger*). Whatever that means. The trustees have in mind Kiefer's sculpture of monumental folios cast in lead, which the booksellers interpret as a "shield" against the "defeatism that dares deny a future to the book and reading."

You can see that the trustees were trying hard to justify their decision. If they had wanted to give the prize to a painter, the more bookish and challenging Gerhard Richter (born in 1932), just as famous and just as German as Kiefer (born in 1945), might have been a more obvious choice. Richter's work, honored with a 2002 retrospective at New York's Museum of Modern Art, is a running commentary on the evolution of the Federal Republic of Germany, its relation to its past and its *petit*

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bourgeois mentality. Probing the past, for Richter, also meant coming to terms with the fact that his father-in-law was an *SS-Obersturmbannführer*.

Richter's relation to, and artistic treatment of, the past is always specific; Kiefer's is mythic, grand, and vague, providing the *frisson* of horror memorialized. One of Richter's best known works is his 1988 series "October 18, 1977," 15 black-and-white paintings about the then imprisoned Baader-Meinhof gang, the terrorist group dedicated to changing what it considered the authoritarian structures of a Federal Republic that the failed student revolts of 1968 left untouched.

Germany's critical establishment tried hard this year to commemorate the various uprisings of 1968, and the year before tried just as hard to get a public discussion going about the fate of the remaining Baader-Meinhof members who remain in prison for committing terrorist acts. But the debate was a non-debate, and 1968 memorial efforts in the press failed to ignite any spark among the Germans, who enjoy a hearty commemoration as much as the French or Americans.

This lack of memorial zest for the events of 1968 in Frankfurt, Berlin, or Prague might be attributed to the depoliticized nihilism of the young, the deep economic angst of the middle-aged, or the feigned indifference of the newly old in whose middle age those events took place. But the fact is that the commemorative emotions of the Germans are still fully tied up in the demands that the 12 cruel years of the National Socialist regime place on their public conscience as now-enlightened European citizens.

Partly in response to their neighbors' long memories, the Germans are driving themselves to remember and invoke with the utmost precision—as they should—every jot and tittle of the Nazis' murderousness on the theory that constant displays of public contrition assuage and reassure their neighbors to the east and west, and the Jews in Israel and America, and that awareness of the Nazi abuses of power will ensure the creation of a truly just, democratic, and empathetic society.

The Germans want to be good because they want to be loved. And placing the Nazi period center stage—in the way the soccer-field-sized national Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe occupies the center of Berlin—is considered essential to foreign acceptability and domestic success. So German establishment culture, which means the high-class cultural products hyped in mainstream newspapers, conducts an incessant dialogue with Nazi Germany. It takes stock of the period's lasting impact on the German psyche, and probes the mystery of how it could have happened that the country of *Dichter und Denker* (poets and thinkers) turned into a nation of murderers and "willing executioners."

Anselm Kiefer

AP PHOTO / MICHEL EULER

The German word for that probing dialogue is *Auseinandersetzung*. It contains the word *auseinandersetzen*—to take apart, which means to explain—but can also mean to quarrel.

Observers sometimes argue that this *Auseinandersetzung* proceeded in stages from denial in the 1950s to lusty self-recrimination in the late 1990s, when Daniel Goldhagen, author of *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, toured Germany, filling large lecture halls with young Germans and drawing standing ovations.

While German academic research on all aspects of the Nazi period has been first-rate, it should be noted that German public culture moved from mourning and memorializing Jewish victims in the 1980s and early '90s to mourning German civilian victims at the end of the century, decoding the minds of the perpetrators and heroizing noble resisters. This is an emancipatory move. The Nazi period is omnipresent in German public culture, especially in politics and the literary arts, and at no time more than in this past year.

Awarding the *Friedenspreis* to Anselm Kiefer instead of Gerhard Richter is a case in point. It is an effort to calm roiling waters. Kiefer's work, so the Booksellers Association argued, showcases a present that is "devoured" and "destroyed" (*zerfressen* and *zerstört*) by the past. Kiefer asks whether "after the Holocaust and the uses to which the Third Reich put the national cultural and artistic traditions, there still can be German artists and uses in his paintings symbolic and mythic elements taken from German history"—thereby answering his own question.

In the early 1980s Kiefer's teutonic pictorial world and Wagnerian monumentalism were anathema to enlightened critics. His work was considered irrational and reactionary, if not proto-fascist. But after Kiefer's having gone through the purifying fires of Israel, and received the Wolf Prize in 1990, the reading of his work changed and is now perfect for an award showcasing the ethically reformed Germany that, in 1998, had been cast into disrepute by an acceptance speech deemed offensive to the Jews.

More about that in a moment.

The *Friedenspreis* was first funded privately, in 1950, and the first recipient was Max Tau, a German Jewish writer and publisher who had fled to Sweden and Norway, where he spent his life promoting German literature. A year later the prize began to take on an expiatory function. The 1951 recipient was the Alsatian-born Albert Schweitzer (anticipating the Nobel committee by one year), and the ceremony was moved from a private villa in Hamburg to a public place of crucial symbolic significance, the Paulskirche (St. Paul's Church) in Frankfurt, the

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meeting place of Germany's first democratic national assembly in 1848.

Although, in 1848, Germany's progressive educated class failed in its attempt to unite Germany on democratic principles, the civic courage displayed by intellectuals in the Paulskirche, and their idealistic rhetoric about freedom and equality before the law, created a legacy of extraordinary symbolic power, a conceptual "city upon a hill" around which most Germans could rally. In moving from a private home to the symbolically charged Paulskirche, the ceremony became a public event of national significance, showcasing for the world the state of the German moral conscience.

Of course, one cynical argument would be that the shift in venue served the economic interests of the Publishers and Booksellers Association, which funded the prize. They made their money selling cultural goods to the Germans; but more important was the reestablishment of foreign business ties in the book market, which could be helped by a creditable display of goodness.

Thus the *Friedenspreisfeier*, a gravely festive event, became the highlight of the Frankfurt Book Fair. By the mid-1950s the demand for tickets was so great that the organizers were obliged to publish a statement about their intent to distribute the tickets fairly. The event was piped into assembly rooms for an overflow audience, and serving the spirit of democracy, the Sunday morning *Friedenspreisfeier* was broadcast live on public television in German living rooms.

The function of the prize, in the words of the official statement, was the "regeneration of a sense of self-worth through critical reflection." The German word for self-worth is *Selbstbewußtsein*, which also means self-confidence through self-awareness. The mood at these ceremonies was somber and church-like, a strange mixture of contrition and self-confidence. Over the years Germans have perfected the paradox of self-confident contrition, or contrite self-confidence. They grew bolder in their choice of recipients, moving from Theodor Heuss (1959) and Victor Gollancz (1960) to Léopold Sédor Senghor (1968) and Ernesto Cardenal (1980) to Yasar Kemal (1997) and Assia Djebar (2000). Jews took pride of place both as recipients and in delivering the speeches of praise. Hannah Arendt and Nelly Sachs, Ernst Bloch and Manès Sperber, Alfred Grosser and Hans Jonas, Teddy Kollek and Yehudi Menuhin, were so honored. The Jews came, the international community listened, business flourished, the booksellers were happy, the Germans were on their way to goodness.

Until 1998. That year the committee picked Martin Walser, one of a handful of German megawriters (*Großschriftsteller*) born in the late 1920s. In his sophisticated speech Walser objected to the moral correctness required of this Sunday sermon (*Sonntagspredigt*) and so exposed the precise nature of the *Feier* in which he was to function as a representative German: crushed, contrite, yet newly self-confident.

Walser refused to play. Instead of presenting the prescribed critical reflection, he described a case of legal injustice caused by the unification of Germany, and then, to show what a truly courageous speech in the Paulskirche ought to be arguing, criticized the appropriation of Auschwitz as its transformation into a moral cudgel to achieve political results. He defined moral conscience as a private, not a public, matter, and his audience responded with a standing ovation. Few noticed that Ignatz Bubis, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, remained seated and, two days later, accused Walser of "mental arson" (*geistige Brandstiftung*).

The accusation by a prominent Jew of a prominent German triggered a fierce debate about the speech and whether Walser was an anti-Semite. But no matter how that issue was resolved, the ethical purity of the prize had now been impugned, and largely because of Walser's standing ovation.

It is not unreasonable to guess that subsequent recipients have been chosen with an eye to damage control. The Jewish historian Fritz Stern, born in Breslau (now Wroclaw) in 1926, and whose family had fled Germany in 1938, was the perfect successor to Walser in 1999: a Jew touched by the cruelty of Nazi Germany at ease in the Federal Republic. In 2003, the start of the Iraq war (widely believed in Germany to have been engineered by Jewish neoconservatives keen on reorganizing the Middle East to strengthen Israel's position) relieved the pressure on the Germans to demonstrate contrition and goodness. The American Jewish critic Susan Sontag was the recipient that year, and obliged by delivering a moral indictment of the United States.

Yet the damage from Walser's speech and its reception could not be considered fully repaired until 2007, when Saul Friedländer, born in Prague in 1932 to German-speaking Jews, accepted the prize. Friedländer had spent the war in a French monastery while his parents, turned away as refugees by Switzerland, were arrested in Vichy France and perished in Auschwitz.

Friedländer had just published the second volume of his magisterial history, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*; and it was Friedländer who, in his remarks after winning the Geschwister-Scholl Prize in Munich in 1998, insisted that the Germans' incessant memorializing of murdered Jews is not (as Walser claimed) a compulsory exercise to which Germans are whipped by the cultural and political establishment. Since the Germans are now a "normal people," he argued, they practice the rituals of normal peoples, which "traditionally" include memorializing "its heroes and its dead, including the victims of war."

Kiefer is only the third German-born recipient of the prize since Martin Walser. The philosopher Jürgen Habermas and the sociologist Wolf Lepenies preceded him (in 2001 and 2006), and they were both safe bets. The organizers pray that Kiefer is, too.

There is some risk since Kiefer, like Goethe in *Elective Affinities*, believes in the shaping power of myth, and locates memory "not only in our head, but deep in our cells." This could easily morph into an exculpatory strategy. As Kiefer delivers his acceptance speech in the Paulskirche, representing Germany's public conscience, the organizers will sit with baited breath. When the applause erupts, they will scan the room for signs of dissent. If there are none, they are safe for another year. ♦

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Village Vanguard

Bob Dylan and the origins of folk-rock.

BY RONALD RADOSH

Everyone recognizes the cover photo for Bob Dylan's 1963 Columbia album, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. The singer is walking down Jones Street on a cold winter day in Greenwich Village. He is wearing a thin suede jacket and is holding onto a girl wearing a loden coat and boots, a young woman with a nice smile and long brunette hair.

The girl was Suze Rotolo, the daughter of Italian immigrant Communist parents, and Dylan's first serious girlfriend. Now this photo adorns the dust jacket, beckoning to readers who want to know more about Dylan and his life with Rotolo.

A Freewheelin' Time
A Memoir of Greenwich Village in the Sixties
by Suze Rotolo
Broadway Books, 384 pp., $22.95

For years she has been the woman in the background, someone who has kept silent both about Dylan and her own life. With the publication of her own memoir, *A Freewheelin' Time*, Rotolo, now in her sixties, has come out of the shadows and given us a heartfelt, lyrical, and intriguing picture of not only her life with the enigmatic Dylan but a picture of life in the vibrant folk music community that was emerging in the Village at the time. We get vignettes of some well-known personalities: the "Mayor of Greenwich Village," as the late Dave Van Ronk was called; the beautiful folkie Carolyn Hester, who had come North from Lubbock, Texas; the singer who first emulated and copied the style of Woody Guthrie, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, who dubbed himself "the last of the Brooklyn cowboys." Elliott, she writes, "was the son of Woody and Bob was the son of Jack."

We get to meet other Village characters: Liam Clancy and the Clancy brothers; the famed sandal maker Allan Block; the proprietor of The Folklore Center, Izzy Young; and the young political songwriter Phil Ochs, who was in a fierce competition with Dylan. Most of them were starting out, lived in cheap walk-up flats, and hung out at bars like The White Horse, which had become famous as the pub where Dylan Thomas drank himself to death.

Rotolo's book can be read alongside David Hajdu's *Positively 4th Street*, Dave Van Ronk's memoir *The Mayor of MacDougal Street*, John Cohen's book of photos and texts of rare Dylan radio programs (*Young Bob*), and of course, the fascinating chapters on the Village in Dylan's own memoir, *Chronicles: Volume One*.

What Rotolo brings to the story is something that only she could offer: the coming-of-age story of a young woman thrust into an affair with an intense, ambitious, and artistic genius. When the 17-year-old Rotolo met Dylan, she was rather lost. Unlike her friends in Queens who headed off to college, Rotolo, a poor student with an artistic bent, headed to the Village. She soon began a passionate affair with the 20-year-old Dylan, another recent arrival who was trying to make it as a folk singer, without a reputation or following.

Then Dylan was discovered and signed by John Hammond to Columbia Records, and fame and fortune was on its way. Dylan's overnight success made Rotolo feel like "a string on Bob Dylan's guitar," his "chick." She was approvingly seen by Pete Seeger as the "woman behind the great man" and by Alan Lomax as one who would stand "by the poet, the genius [who] unselfishly tended to his needs and desires."

It was difficult for Rotolo to do this while her own identity was so unformed and she was still "struggling for permission to be." She loved Dylan, but felt she could not be his muse, follow him around, be there for him when she was needed, put up with his secretive personality, and tolerate his relationships with other women. She needed to become her own person, to learn what she wanted to do in life, and not to live a life walking "a few paces behind, picking up his tossed-off candy wrappers."

Rotolo's Italian parents were committed Communist party members, making Rotolo one of the ranks of New York's somewhat unique colony of "Red diaper babies." She grew up in a narrow and sectarian culture, among those who believed the Soviet Union was the model for a good society. This gave her a sense of identity, but made her feel alienated from her more conventional peers. Her mother was, for a time, an editor and columnist for *L'Unita*, the Italian-American CP newspaper.

When Suze started going out with Bob Dylan, she introduced him to the civil rights movement and the other left-wing causes of the day. But her first political act was working for Bayard Rustin, the anti-Communist social democrat, helping organize the Youth March on Washington for Integrated Schools, a predecessor to *the* March on Washington. Later, she worked in the New York office of the Congress of Racial Equality, where she helped coordinate the Freedom Rides.

Her view of the Communist left was rather naïve. Like Dylan's, her bent was art, music, theater, and painting. Yet she saw herself as part of a family of like-minded people of the left who intended to change the world for the better and institute what she calls Karl Marx's good ideas. Fear of McCarthyism and what might happen to her and her friends' Communist parents was always in the background, giving her what she calls "an outsider status inflicted on us by the Cold War and our parents' political beliefs."

Yet she was inquisitive enough to seek out and read *The God That Failed*,

Ronald Radosh, adjunct fellow at the Hudson Institute, is the author, most recently, of Red Star Over Hollywood: The Film Colony's Long Romance with the Left, *with Allis Radosh.*

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which she calls the story of six ex-Communist writers' "agonizing journey . . . an examination of the Cold War and Stalinism by these important thinkers," a book that "made an impact." She knew the stories told were accurate. Yet Rotolo felt, at the same time, that she "was betraying the elders" and so she read it in secret! To acknowledge that the book contained difficult truths, she writes, was impossible: After all, *The God That Failed* was praised by anti-Communists, and "you were either on one side or the other."

Rotolo's strength is that while she knew that even to "raise questions about the Soviet Union and Stalin" might lead to being denounced as "a traitor and opportunist," she stood her own ground. A "big Question Mark suddenly appeared over my head," she writes, and she "began to doubt." Her quest even led her to find out about the *verboten* Italian anarchist and anti-Communist Carlo Tresca, whose "illicit . . . outlaw" status "made him infinitely attractive."

The heart of the book, as one would expect, is her life with Bob Dylan. The affair began in July 1961 and lasted, with a great deal of turmoil and drama, until 1964, by which time Dylan's fame and fortune had grown. His intensity and dark moods made her feel so trapped, she writes, that "I thought I would suffocate." Walking down East 7th Street with him one night, she simply told him that she had to go, and "turned and walked away without looking back."

Dylan, she wrote in a diary entry that year, was "an extraordinary writer but I don't think of him as an honorable person." But where, she asked herself, "is it written that this must be so in order to do great work in the world?"

In between the years with Dylan she went to Italy in search of the education she missed. In Florence she soaked in the great Italian artists. Then it was on to the medieval town of Perugia, in Italy's center, where she enrolled in art school. Here she had time to think, reflect, and develop as an artist in her own right. She would, however, receive a stream of cards and letters from Dylan, who wanted her to return to him.

While in Italy, she read Françoise Gilot's scathing book about Pablo Picasso, expecting to learn about the great painter whom she admired. Instead, she found it a book of "revelations, lessons, warnings." She found the similarities between Picasso and Dylan disturbing and read the book twice. Picasso, like Dylan, "took no responsibility . . . came to no decisions and did nothing that would have made it possible or easier for the various women he was involved with to leave him and get on with their lives."

She would have to make the painful separation.

Dylan loved and missed her, but his prime concern was his art. In her book she is very forgiving and shows great respect for him as an artist, despite their difficult relationship. All artists, she writes, move through the path of "imitate, assimilate, then innovate." Dylan may have started out echoing Woody Guthrie and Jack Elliott but "worked hard to learn his craft, to make his art his own."

Hearing his early songs, the press soon dubbed him a "protest singer." He had come to some issues because, as she writes, "I threw those interests out to Bob." He may have started singing traditional folk music and blues, but soon began writing his personal interior monologues in a form that captivated the world and transformed American music. Rotolo read Arthur Rimbaud, and soon Dylan did, too. He did not betray anyone when he "went electric" in 1965, she writes: He wrote about what was on his mind, and did not want to do what others wanted, even if it meant "alienating his public, fans, friends, and lovers."

The leftwing audience, steeled in the dogma of the Old Left's Marxism, expected Dylan to continue the political song tradition of Guthrie. "Bob listened, absorbed, honored them, and then walked away," explains Rotolo. An artist "can't be made to serve a theory," she writes. Hence Dylan refused to accept the torch they sought to hand him. Sadly, she found that the emerging New Left was not much different and "felt equally betrayed by Dylan." She cannot comprehend how this supposedly different New Left, that she thought had rejected "the orthodoxy that had kept the left cemented to Stalinism," acted just the same as the Old Left.

The end of *A Freewheelin' Time* finds Rotolo turning back to the leftwing world she had come from. Always intrigued by Cuba, she hoped that its Latin culture would "give artists more leeway under Communism … play up the 'party' in Communist Party," and that the Cuban revolution "would add color and soul and a democratic structure to the worthy ideas of Karl Marx." She hoped that "the ice-cold rule of Stalinism could not survive the warmth of the Cuban people."

Rotolo was not ready to give up on the possibility of finding a Marxist utopia. The result was her one last fling with the political left: Her trip to Cuba in 1964. She joined up with a generation of younger Communists who had broken with the party and formed the Maoist group Progressive Labor, and helped them organize the first group to publicly break the U.S. travel ban to Cuba. There she personally met both Fidel Castro and Ché Guevara, and basked in their limelight.

Yet what motivated her was her "preoccupation with the censorship of writers and artists in the Soviet-bloc countries" and her desire to see for herself whether Cuba was following a similar path. She did not like the belief that art had to be a weapon, and writes that she had "secret and serious doubts" about both the slogan and the advocacy of socialist realism.

Unfortunately, while she regales us with the drama of going on an illegal trip to Cuba via London, France, and Prague—flying first-class—she tells us next to nothing about the answers she found to her questions about the lives of Cuban writers and artists. Did she meet the poet and journalist Carlos Franqui, then Cuba's major cultural figure, who soon went into exile and told the truth about the prison Castro had created? Is she familiar with the testimony he gave in his books and articles a few years later? Franqui's interests were the same as hers—art and literature and the graphic arts—and she would have had much in common with him. Does she know that Castro branded him a *gusano*—a "worm" and traitor—and claimed he was a CIA agent? ♦

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The Joke's on Him

Bill Maher could use a lesson in civility from Michael Moore. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

It is the thesis of the new nonfiction film *Religulous* that religion is a "neurological disorder," and that "belief must be destroyed so that mankind might live." This is the creed of Bill Maher, the stand-up comedian turned talk-show host, who appears in virtually every frame. In the last 10 minutes Maher and his director, Larry Charles, literally turn into fire and brimstone preachers as *Religulous* becomes a raging secular sermon about humankind meeting its end in a flaming furnace.

Religulous
Directed by Larry Charles

Maher stands in the midst of rubble in Megiddo, the hillside in Israel that the book of Revelation calls Armageddon, and consigns humanity and the planet to destruction either from nuclear weapons or ecological disaster if silly people do not cease their demented belief in divinity. Call it "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Godless."

I suppose the irony of Maher the Atheist calling down nuclear hellfire on believers, as Jonathan Edwards threatened unbelievers with eternal damnation over 250 years ago in his astonishing sermon, is intentional. But it is far from certain. In my experience, when comedians decide the moment has come for them to speak seriously, they instantly transform into the most earnest, humorless, and irony-challenged people on the face of the earth.

As his film concludes, Maher seems genuinely to believe that he has, in the preceding 100 minutes, made an unassailable argument that religious belief is not only stupid and mindless, but apocalyptically dangerous. And like Al Gore in his film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, Maher clearly thinks he offers such an airtight case that *Religulous* may actually save the world.

Becoming mankind's savior would be quite the career advance for Maher, who spent years as a second-rate comedian on the brick-wall circuit. He had a bit of luck when, in the years that any comedian on the planet could get a television show, he found himself hosting a nightly chat session on the then-unwatched Comedy Central in which political pundits sat cheek by jowl with comics even less talented than Maher discoursing uncomfortably on subjects of the day—and earning only a scowl from Maher if any of them got a laugh, since he was the host and the laughs were all supposed to be directed at him.

Now, 15 years later, his chat show is on HBO, and he still scowls should anyone else dare to say anything funny that wasn't scribbled down for him by his ghostwriting team.

Maher's boorish conduct on his own shows is nothing, however, next to the behavior on display in *Religulous*. His method in *Religulous* is to interview people who are far poorer, far less sophisticated, and vastly better mannered than he, and as he does so, to laugh at them, tell them that their deepest beliefs are the sort of nonsense he gave up when he was 11 years old, and then press ahead with another question intended only to expose their idiocy.

As he does this, his interlocutors freeze, slack-jawed with disbelief, and then gamely attempt to go on because (a) that's what their mothers taught them, and (b) there is a camera in their faces and they've figured out that if they let Maher have it, he is just going to make them look worse.

I don't think I've ever seen someone conduct himself as rudely—either on film or in real life—as Maher does here. (Maybe Michael Savage on the radio.) True, Michael Moore makes fun of the yahoos he interviews, but he doesn't do it as he interviews them. Rather, he waits until he is in the editing room. Perhaps Maher is braver than Moore, although I doubt it; on the evidence of his conduct in *Religulous*, he just seems like a jerk.

Of course, the faithful he shows us are nothing more than caricatures. The movie spends 10 minutes in a Florida amusement park called The Holy Land Experience, in which the crucifixion is reenacted, with Christian rock music, seven times a day. Maher insults the obese worshippers at a church inside a trailer parked at a truck stop, then finds a former Jew for Jesus—obese, naturally—to insult—inside the man's ludicrous religious trinket store.

He makes mincemeat of a Puerto Rican guy who claims to be the direct descendant of Jesus Christ, and a onetime member of Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes who wears $2,000 lizard-skin shoes and can't properly quote the Bible. The only rabbi who appears is an anti-Zionist Hasid who attended a Holocaust-denial conference in Tehran sponsored by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. And throughout, whenever he wishes to dip into religious history, he does so by using snippets of Hollywood Bible movies.

Making fun of religious kitsch is the easiest thing on earth, because that kitsch is an uglification of something beautiful, a literalization of something abstract. But then, so is *Religulous*, which takes rationalism and reduces it to mere crassness. Maher's own towering vulgarity on the subject of faith—the most powerful and meaningful force in the history of human existence—is nothing more than a mirror image of religious kitsch. It cheapens, lowers, and distorts, and reflects not righteousness in the service of truth, but self-righteousness in the service of Narcissus. ♦

John Podhoretz, editorial director of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"The global financial crisis has laid waste to some major banks and other financial institutions in the United States and Europe, but Iceland may be the first country to face the prospect of going bust along with them."
—New York Times, *October 8, 2008*

Parody

deniers. It's WARM

ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

DAY, OCTOBER 15, 2008

TRUMP BUYS ICELAND

Plans 'Ice Castle' Casino, World's Largest Seafood Buffet

By ERIC PFANNER

REYKJAVIK, Iceland — In his first address before parliament, real estate and gambling tycoon Donald Trump announced a deal allowing him to purchase the Republic of Iceland for $5.5 billion as well as exchange all Icelanders' now-worthless kronas for U.S. currency at a stunningly generous 1:1 ratio. "Well, not exactly U.S. dollars," clarified the billionaire. "But you can exchange your kronas for gaming chips valid in Iceland and at any of my Atlantic City properties. They're handsome coins and color-coded—the ones with the image of Shecky Greene are collector's items."

Bewildered Icelanders wondered how their government could agree to this arrangement, which was finalized after Finance Minister Arni Mathiesen met with Mr. Trump at his Taj Mahal casino. "Arni enjoyed a show and stayed in a comped suite," explained Trump. "The next morning he signed a contract." Mr. Mathiesen will remain in charge of his nation's finances, but with a new title: Director of Gaming Operations-Reykjavik. As for Prime Minister Geir Haarde? Said Iceland's new landlord, "You're fired!" (Mr. Haarde has since taken a job as food and beverage chairman at Trump Plaza in Atlantic City.)

The Reykjavik government first turned to the International Monetary Fund, then to Russia, for economic aid; no offers materialized. "I'm not surprised in the least," said Mr. Trump. "[The IMF] are a bunch of jerks. I wouldn't trust them with my dry-cleaning." As for the Russians? "I'd rather deal with 'Fat Tony' Salerno than deal with Vladimir Putin. The guy's got no honor, no respect, and most of all, no class."

AFP PHOTO / Amanda Rivkin / Aconcagua Image

Donald Trump visits the Gullfoss waterfall in southwest Iceland where he plans to build his Trump Towers Condominium Complex and Waterfall.

As part of the bailout, Mr. Trump plans on building his Ice Castle Hotel and Casino near the Eyjafjallajökull glacier, a popular tourist attraction. "That way you can come in from the cold and play the hottest progressive slots east of the boardwalk," said the tycoon, who noted the casino will also feature the world's largest seafood buffet. "You'll be clawing your way out of it!"

In the midst of this transition, Mr. Trump is also conducting auditions for the Miss Iceland Beauty Pageant: "The winner will not only compete in Miss Universe but become the official queen of Iceland and live with the new king, who just happens to be

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NASA's 'Lame' Mercury Probe

Big Surprise: Too Hot for Life

BY KENNETH CHANG

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